

This issue: A special look at Jack Kirby's DEMON past and present, including an interview with MATT WAGNER! Also: STEVE ENGLEHART speaks out!

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ISSUE #1 SHIPPING IN MAY—FROM  **ECLIPSE COMICS**



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PREVIEW: Matt Wagner chats about his reinterpretation of *The Demon*, with a few words on *Mage* as well, on page 19.



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HERO HISTORY: J. Vance examines the history of Jack (King) Kirby's most horrifying hero, *The Demon*, on page 28.



Photo by MIKE CATTON

INTERVIEW: Steve Englehart reveals what's happening with the *Silver Surfer*, *Green Lantern*, and *Daredevil* on page 43.

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OUR COVER:

Matt Wagner drew and colored this sensational interpretation of *The Demon*, from his upcoming DC mini-series. Illustration © 1986 DC Comics Inc.



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EDITORIAL

by David Smay

Robert Crumb is a genius and a giant—the sheer volume of his work, the consistency of his viewpoint and what he has captured about the American spirit is just breathtaking.
—Mike Baron

Crumb is just a consummate draftsman. He's an extraordinary artist. He can take anything and do wonders with it.
—Howard Chaykin

In our little comic book library here at Fantagraphics we have two of Robert Crumb's sketchbooks. Some people get their jollies by reading other people's mail. I prefer to poke through an artist's notes. The creative process seems accessible, almost knowable as you see an artist struggling with his demons and fetishes. Ideas are jotted and plotted, abandoned or adopted; technical exercises yield strange fruit—neat stuff. Now, the way I figure it, about half of *Amazing Heroes*' readers have never even heard of Robert Crumb. That's criminal, but this isn't an editorial about Robert Crumb. Nope, it's just my convoluted way of writing an editorial about bad taste.

Let's say we can divide comic books into three categories: escapism, entertainment and art. These categories are as much a product of the audience's expectations as the creator's achievement. For example, continuity becomes a priority when the audience cares more about maintaining the illusion of reality in, say, the Marvel Universe than the artistic integrity of any single comic book. At this level, quality is irrelevant because the comic book is a commodity. At the other end of the spectrum are works that satisfy the highest aesthetic criteria: Will Eisner's "Liteforce," Gilbert Hernandez's "Heartbreak Soup," Peter Bagge's "The Reject," Alan Moore's "V for Vendetta." These are powerful, often harrowing stories; works that insist on an unflinching honesty from the reader. Between the audience which expects nothing and the stories which demand a great deal are the comic books that succeed as genuine entertainment.

Amazing Heroes has but one goal (this week). We want you to kiss a bound edition of *Little Nemo* and take a vow of impeccable taste. Why settle for a comic book that's just a product? Not every comic book is going to be a work of art but there's no excuse for buying something that doesn't stand on its own merits. *Amazing Heroes* is, admittedly, tilted towards the idea of comic books as entertainment. This is the tricky part, though, because once you say entertainment, you're tempted to say "just" entertainment. You start taking the schlock for granted. And really, the difference between pap and entertainment and art is a matter of degree (and care and craft...).

So this is the second chapter of the *Amazing Heroes* manifesto: we're committed to the idea that comic books should never be less than entertaining. Comic books should have veneer and snap and zip and other adjectives associated with rubber bands. They shouldn't be afraid of whimsy (*Mazing Man* is a brave example). Ditko's skyscraperscapes were distinctive and original, same with Simonson's Asgard—we demand that every comic show as much invention. We should be tempted with fantastic visions, not suckered with cheap knock-offs.

Painfully obvious? Well, somebody was buying the *Dazzler Graphic Novel*. And I'm willing to bet there's more than one comic on your shopping list that you buy solely to complete your collection, irregardless of its worth. Listen, some day you're going to have to decide whether your commitment is to the medium itself or to the superhero genre. Do yourself a favor and read the good stuff now: be discriminating. That way you'll be ready when an artist like Robert Crumb holds a mirror to your face.

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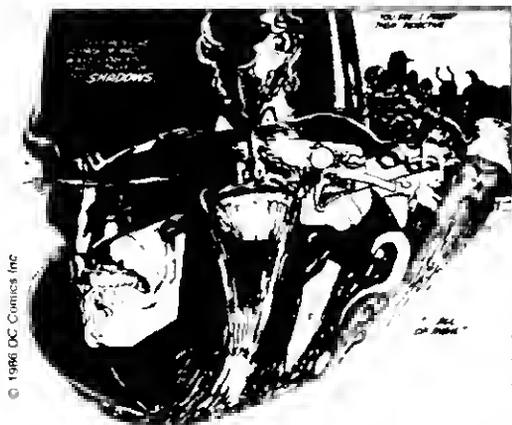
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Newsflashes

DARK KNIGHT HITS BULL'S EYE: FRANK MILLER's first major project as writer/artist since *Ronin*, *Dark Knight*, has proven to be his most successful to date. With major coverage in *Rolling Stone* and through the AP wire service, and an upcoming story in *Spin* magazine, the title has gathered the most press attention of a comics project in years. As a result, the first volume of the series, *The Dark Knight Returns*, has already gone back to press twice, for a combined press run almost doubling the (large) initial orders.



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SPEAKING OF BATMAN: *Batman* #400 will be coming out this June, and in DC's tradition of centenary issues, it will feature a long story by the series' regular writer, DOUG MOENCH, with each chapter illustrated by a different artist: GEORGE PEREZ, STEVE BISSETTE, JOE KUBERT, ART ADAMS, PARIS CULLINS, RICK LEONARDI, BERNI WRIGHTSON, BRIAN BOLLAND, and others. The issue will also feature an introduction by STEPHEN KING, and a painted cover by BILL SIENKIEWICZ. It's \$1.50 for this 64-page extravaganza.

DC NOTES: TREVOR VON EEDEN returns to his roots as he tackles the art on a Black Lightning solo story in *The Outsiders* #12... VON EEDEN can also be seen in the issue of *Adventures of the Outsiders* out the same month, #38... *Swamp Thing* #53 is a double-sized issue, written by ALAN MOORE and drawn by JOHN TOTLEBEN... STEVE BISSETTE has pencilled the cover to *Tales of the Teen Titans* #70, which is being inked by regular Titans inker ROMEO TANGHAL... The seventh issue of *Secret Origins* focuses on Sandman and the Green Lantern Corps; the former is chronicled by ROY THOMAS and MIKE HERNANDEZ, while the latter is handled by STEVE ENGLEHART, ERNIE COLON, and MIKE FARMER.

BUSCEMA ON THE FF: JOHN BUSCEMA returns to *The Fantastic Four* as penciller and inker with #297, joining new regular writer ROGER STERN. Sixteen years ago, Buscema was the first regular artist to replace JACK KIRBY on the *FF* (after a brief stint by JOHN ROMITA, Sr.).

In the issue preceding Buscema's return, the 64-page #296, Buscema joins BARRY WINDSOR-SMITH, RON FRENZ, JERRY ORDWAY, AL MILGROM, KERRY GAMMILL, and MARK SILVESTRI, each of whom will pencil a chapter of the the issue. The story was plotted by JIM SHOOTER and scripted by STAN LEE.

BACK TO 'NAM: Watch out for *The 'Nam*, an eight-year limited monthly series series dedicated to retelling the Viet Nam war, from 1966 to the end of the U.S.'s involvement in the conflict. The series will feature the *Savage Tales* "Fifth to the 1st" team of LARRY HAMA, editor, DOUG MURRAY, writer, and MICHAEL GOLDEN, artist, augmented by ARMANDO GIL, inker. The first issue ships in June.



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SIMONSON NEWS: WALT SIMONSON joins his wife LOUISE SIMONSON on *X-Factor* with the

10th issue, which focuses on The Angel. This is their first collaboration since an early issue of *Battlestar: Galactica*; BOB WIACEK will be inking Simonson's pencils on the series *Power Pack*, Louise Simonson's other title, goes to a direct-sales only basis with #26; although popular in the direct-sales market, *PP* has been lagging in sales on the newsstand market, and was recently demoted to bi-monthly. JON BOGDANOVE and Bob Wiacek remain the artists on the series, and Cloak and Dagger guest star in the first direct-sales issue. And Walt Simonson is writing a new Star Comic, *Animax*, which will be drawn by STEVE PURCELL and JOHN BEATTY.

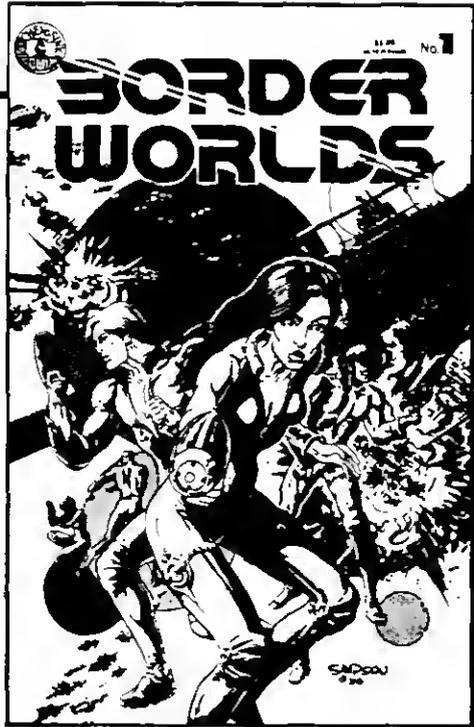
DREDD SWITCHES TO U.S.: Beginning in April, a new American comics company, Quality Comics, will take over publication of the British titles heretofore handled by Eagle Comics. Helmed by DEZ SKINN, Quality is in fact the new version of Quality Communications, the British publisher responsible for the late, acclaimed *Warrior*.

Judge Dredd #34 and *2000 A.D.* #5, originally announced by Eagle, will be the first Quality issues. Shortly thereafter, there will be a price reduction to 95 cents (a la Eclipse's *Miracleman* and other titles), as Quality moves to the Finnish printer that printed the first issue of *Miracleman*.

Quality plans to be publishing eight titles on a regular basis by the end of 1986, including a 48-page, comic-book version of *Warrior*, as well as new titles such as *Liberators*, *Intruders*, *The Projectors*, and *Warworld*.

FIRST TRIES NEWSSTANDS: Beginning with their April releases, First Comics will be testing the newsstand market in and around Chicago with four of their titles: *American Flagg!*, *Badger*, *GrimJack*, and *Nexus*. This means that during the summer, First Comics will be available at select Krock's and Brentano's, B. Dalton, 7-Elevens, and Convenient Food Stores, in the Chicago area. If this experiment works out (and First expects it to increase circulation of the line by eight per cent right off the bat), First plans to expand the program, perhaps eventually tripling its distribution.

FIRST NOTES: The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles join the First crew for the space of a "Munden's Bar" episode in *GrimJack* #26. KEVIN EASTMAN and PETER LAIRD are the creators. The following issue's "Munden's Bar" features *A Distant Soil* creator COLLEEN DORAN illustrating a DEL CLOSE script. *Badger* #16's chapter of "Zoomtown" introduces the art team of CRAIG BRASFIELD and BRIAN THOMAS. Look for the return of *Dynamo Joe* as a regular, unlimited series this summer. NORM BREYFOGLE, after drawing the "Bob Violence" story in *American*



© 1986 Donald Simpson

Flagg! #33, has been chosen as the new regular artist on *Whisper*, beginning with the third issue.

BORDER WORLDS GETS OWN TITLE:

DONALD SIMPSON's "Border Worlds," which has been running in the back of *Megaton Man*, gets its own black-and-white title this July. Kitchen Sink will be publishing the series, which premieres just one month after the finale of *Megaton Man*.

ECLIPSE MISCELLANIA: Speaking of DONALD SIMPSON, he is also doing the art for the lead story in *Mr. Monster* #6, which was co-written by new scripter BRIAN DREGER, laid out by MICHAEL T. GILBERT and BRIAN (*Thunderbunny*) BUNIAK, and colored by RAY FEHRENBACH. In addition to Simpson, that issue also includes a 10-page story pencilled by KEITH GIFFEN and written and inked by MICHAEL T. GILBERT, as well as a reprint of "The Curio Shop," reportedly the first strip ever drawn by STEVE DITKO.

The New Wave #1, on sale in early June, premieres Eclipse's new 16-page/50-cent/bi-weekly format with a super-hero group series written by MINDY NEWELL and drawn by LEE WEEKS and TY TEMPLETON.

Alien Encounters #7 features two stories by BRUCE JONES, illustrated by CHUCK BECKUM and BO HAMPTON. That issue also includes a RICK GEARY story and a tale by DOUGLAS M. WHEELER and RICHARD HOWELL... MIKE SEKOWSKY is the artist on *New DNAgents* #10. A second issue of *Adolescent Radioactive Black Belt Hamsters in 3-D* appears in June. Also shipping in June are Volumes Seven and Eight of the *Johnny Hazard* reprint

NEWSFLASHES

series, covering the November '49-September '51 period, and the third issue of *Kitz 'n' Katz* . . . and Eclipse will have a new cover design beginning in May, courtesy of SCOTT McCLOUD.



1986 Alex Schomburg

A TRIBUTE TO THE LADY: *The Gift*, a 48-page graphic novel published by Blackthorne, chronicles the history of the Statue of Liberty. Written by HENRY GIBSON (of *Laugh-In* fame), the book is illustrated by ALFREDO ALCALA. It costs \$5.95, and will be released this summer.

WaRP BOOKS: From Father Tree Press, a division of WaRP Graphics, comes *Chroma—The Art of Alex Schomburg*, a 108-page book devoted to charting the career of ALEX SCHOMBURG, a Golden Age comics and science fiction artist. The book also includes a new cover painted by Schomburg, and a trio of forewords by HARLAN ELLISON, STAN LEE, and KELLY FREAS. The \$12.95 softcover book (also available in a limited hardcover edition for \$35.00) goes on sale this June.

NOW NEWS: MATT WAGNER, who is interviewed in this issue of *AH*, is painting the cover to NOW Comics' *Eb'n'n* #4, shipping this August. . . . JIM ENGEL's "Dick Duck, Duck Dick," late of *The Comic Reader*, debuts in that issue as well. . . . and MARC HANSEN, the writer/artist of *Ralph Snart Adventures*, will be contributing to the 10th issue of Kitchen Sink's *Snarf*.



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STREETFIGHTER is a 4 issue, 4 color mini-series sure to thrill the comics fan looking for something new and different. If you enjoy MYSTERY and ADVENTURE with plenty of martial arts ACTION and EXCITEMENT, you'll love *STREETFIGHTER*! Join this modern day crusader as he begins his war on the mobsters who would rule Metro City. Superbly written by Ron Fortier with dynamic art by Gary Kato and Bob Seppi. *STREETFIGHTER* is available at comic book specialty shops or by subscription.

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Coming This Summer From
OCEAN COMICS
"THE NEW WAVE IN QUALITY"



Ancient, battle-scarred, ferocious, haughty, red eyes glaring from beneath a royal brow, this was Amok the God-beast.

The fire from his trunk could fill a lake one hoof destroy a fort. Twenty robots could play on his back, a hundred lind shelter in his shadow.

The sound of his trumpeting was delight to all creatures, and this very lowing was enough to put his cows in calf.

The Mekaka worshipped him, for his herd was their clothing and power. The Pit-people made homes in craters, gouged by his mighty tusks.

Even the little Dung-tics thrived on slag from his furnace.

But know this... on the day the God-beast dies, the end of the robots is near and the sun shall set on the era called...

METALZOIC

AN ORIGINAL GRAPHIC NOVEL BY PAT MILLS AND KEVIN O'NEILL COMING FROM DC COMICS IN APRIL

Silly Cover

| | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| AMAZING HEROES | | MAKREL COMICS GROPE | |
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| TUBS-MARINER™ | |  | |
| STARRING PRINCE NIMOY |  | | THAT'S NOT SPOCK, THAT'S THREE SPOCKS * HA-HA * |
|  | IN SEARCH OF A JOKE | | |

By Chas. Gillen

Coming DISTRACTIONS

APRIL 16-30

AIRCEL PUBLISHING

SAMURAI #5
Story/Art. **McEown & Blair**
[\$1.70 32-page direct-sales black-and-white comic; ships 4/15]

BLACKTHORNE

KERRY DRAKE BOOK ONE
With a foreword by Milton Caniff, this begins the reprinting of the complete adventure strip.
Story/Art. **Al Andriola**
[\$6.95 72-page direct-sales squarebound book; ships in April]

DICK TRACY BOOK SIX
Featuring Mumbles.
Story/Art **Chester Gould**
[\$5.95 72-page direct-sales squarebound book; ships in April]

JUNGLE COMICS
Reprinting Fiction House's *Jungle Comics* #1.
Cover **Eisner & Fine**
[\$5.95 72-page direct-sales squarebound book; ships in Feb.]

COMICO COMICS

ELEMENTALS #7
"Clout"
As David Golden engages in a heated political struggle, his daughter Fathom and her friends are in quite a different kind of battle.
Plot/Pencils **Willingham**
Script **Jack Herman**
Inks **Rich Rankin**
[\$1.50 direct-sales color comic; ships 4/18]



© 1986 Matt Wagner

MAGE #12
The conclusion of the night at the Styx Casino hotel.
Story/Art **Matt Wagner**
Plus the continuation of "Grendel," with **Rich Rankin** inking.
[\$1.50 direct-sales color comic; ships 4/18]

ROBOTECH THE NEW GENERATION #7
"Paper Hero"
Story **Jack Herman**
Art **Byers & Poaton**
[\$1.50 direct-sales color comic; ships 4/18]

CONTINUITY COMICS

ECHD OF FUTUREPAST #8
"AE-35"
Story/Art. **Will Jungkuntz**
"Automated Supermarket"
Story **Ricardo Barreiro**
Art **Juan Gimenez**
"Torpedo: Momma Tuna"
Story **Sanchez Abull**
Art **Jordi Bernet**
"Tippie Toe Jones"
Story **Lindley Farley**
Art **Louis Mitchell**
Cover **Neal Adams**
[\$2.95 48-page direct-sales full-color comic; ships April]

REVENGERS STARRING MEGALITH #2
Megalith goes to a Canadian border town and finds a blockade there.
Story/inks **Neal Adams**
Pencils **Iota Subotici**
[\$2.00 direct-sales full-color comic; ships April]

DC COMICS

ACTION #582
Superman's parents live again!
Story **Craig Boldman**
Art **Kurt Schaffenberger**
[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 4/29; newsstand o/s 5/22]

ADVENTURES OF THE OUTSIDERS #36
The Outsiders resolve to move to Los Angeles, and become "Agents of Change."
Story **Mike W. Barr**
Art **Davis & Naary**
[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 4/22; newsstand o/s 5/15]

ALL-STAR SQUADRON #60
The JSA's back from hyperspace as Crisis 1942 comes to a startling conclusion!
Story **R. & D. Thomas**
Art **Jones & Clark/Colletta**
Cover **Jerry Ordway**
[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 5/8; newsstand o/s 5/29]

BATMAN ANNUAL #10
Penniless, Batman finds himself alone, totally at the mercy of Prof. Hugo Strange!
Story **Doug Moench**
Art **Cowan & Giordano**
[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 4/29; newsstand o/s 5/22]



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BLUE DEVIL #27
Godfrey Goose is on the loose and Hollywood is becoming cartoonified!
Story **Dan Miahkin**
Art **Kupperberg & Collina**
Cover **Cullins & Martin**
[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 4/22; newsstand o/s 5/15]

BOOSTER GOLD #7

Booster learns about the abuse of super-powers from the Man of Steel, the hard way!

Story..... **Dan Jurgens**
 Art/Cover..... **Jurgens & DeCarlo**
[75¢ newsstand color comic, ships 4/22; newsstand o/s 5/15]

THE DARK KNIGHT #3

Batman must end the Joker's killing spree, once and for all!

Story/Art..... **Frank Miller**
 Inks..... **Klausa Janson**
 Color..... **Lynn Varley**
[52.95 48-page full-color squarebound direct-sales comic; ships 4/22]

DC CHALLENGE #10

Metron scolds the Guardians, and on Earth, the JLA, Titans and Outsiders save the day. Then enter: Sinestro!

Story..... **Dan Mishkin**
 Art..... **Swan & Austin**
 Cover..... **Cullins & Austin**
[51.50 direct-sales color comic; ships 4/29]

DETECTIVE COMICS #565

A turning point in the relationship of Batman and Catwoman and how it affects Robin.

Story..... **Doug Moench**
 Art..... **Colan & Bob Smith**
 Cover..... **Colan & Giordano**
[75¢ newsstand color comic, ships 4/29; newsstand o/s 5/22]

GREEN LANTERN CORPS #203

Villains galore in an all-out action issue

Story..... **Steve Englehart**
 Art..... **Staton & Farmer**
 Cover..... **Staton & Patterson**
[75¢ newsstand color comic, ships 4/22; newsstand o/s 5/15]

HAWKMAN #1

The first issue of the new ongoing series. Shock ending in this issue as the Shadow War continues.

Story..... **Tony Isabella**
 Art..... **Howell & Heck**
 Cover..... **Howell & Giordano**
[75¢ newsstand color comic, ships 4/29; newsstand o/s 5/22]



HEROES FOR HUNGER

Superman & Batman team up with Lex Luthor in a 48 page story about death and hope. **Jim Starlin** and **Berni Wrightson** are among contributors. Proceeds going to feed Ethiopia.

Story..... **Various**
 Art..... **Various**
 Cover..... **Adams & Giordano**
[51.50¢ newsstand color comic, ships 4/29; newsstand o/s 5/22]



INFINITY, INC. #29

The JSA's gone, so Jade takes a trip home and it ends in disaster.

Story..... **R. & D. Thomas**
 Art..... **McFarlane & DeZuniga**
[51.50 direct-sales color comic, ships 4/22]

LOIS LANE #1

Lois learns about missing children and a simple news assignment turns into an obsession. Wraparound cover.

Story..... **Mindy Newell**
 Art..... **Gray Morrow**
[51.50 48-page newsstand color comic; ships 5/6; newsstand o/s 5/29]

LORDS OF THE ULTRA-REALM #3

Possessed by the voice of madness, Savage Falcon returns to Earth to battle the Lord of Rage.

Story..... **Doug Moench**
 Art/Cover..... **Pat Broderick**
[51.50 direct-sales color comic; ships 5/6]

NEW TEEN TITANS #23

At long last the secret of Raven! Plus, the final fate of Starfire.

Story..... **Marv Wolfman**
 Art..... **Barreto & Tanghal**
 Cover..... **George Perez**
[51.50 direct-sales color comic; ships 4/22]

SGT. ROCK #411

Story..... **Robert Kanigher**
 Art..... **Andy Kubert**
 Cover..... **Joe Kubert**
[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 4/22; newsstand o/s 5/15]

THE SHADOW #4

The Shadow's final confrontation!
 Story/Art..... **Howard Chaykin**
[51.50 direct-sales color comic; ships 4/29]

SUPERMAN ANNUAL #12

Superman and Luthor team up to save Earth from being destroyed by Luthor's warsuit!

Story..... **Cary Bates**
 Art..... **Savluk & Marcos**
 Cover..... **Brian Bolland**
[51.25 newsstand color comic, ships 4/29; newsstand o/s 5/22]

SWAMP THING #51

Swamp Thing returns home to Louisiana, but Abby's got troubles of her own.

Story..... **Alan Moore**
 Art..... **Veitch & Alcalá**
 Cover..... **Bissette & Totleben**
[75¢ newsstand color comic, ships 4/22; newsstand o/s 5/15]

TALES OF THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES #338

Timber Wolf sets out to fulfill Karate Kid's will.

Story..... **Paul Levitz**
 Art..... **Lightle & Mahlstedt**
 Cover..... **Steve Lightle**
[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 4/29; newsstand o/s 5/22]

TEEN TITANS ANNUAL #2

John Byrne's DC premiere! Also, a **Jim Balke**-illustrated story on the secret origin of Brother Blood!

Story..... **Marv Wolfman**
 Art..... **John Byrne**
[52.50 direct-sales color comic, ships 5/6; newsstand o/s 5/29]

TEEN TITANS SPOTLIGHT #1

As Starfire returns to Earth, she is embroiled in the horrors of Apartheid.

Story..... **Marv Wolfman**
 Art..... **Denys Cowan**
[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 5/6; newsstand o/s 5/29]

WARLORD #108

Morgan meets a female Nemesis on par with Deimos, who thirsts for human blood!

Story..... **Michael Fleisher**
 Art..... **Ron Randall**
[75¢ newsstand color comic, ships 4/22; newsstand o/s 5/15]

WHO'S WHO #16

Phantom Zone, Phantom Stranger, Plastic Man, Psycho Pirate, Protty, Poison Ivy, Power Girl et al.

Text..... **Len Wein**
 Art..... **Various**
 Cover..... **Perez & Giordano**
[51.00 newsstand color comic, ships 4/22; newsstand o/s 5/15]





1986 King Features Syndicate

DRAGON LADY PRESS

CLASSIC ADVENTURE STRIPS #6

Reprints a complete Rip Kirby story from 1953 (Alex Raymond), a Sundays-only Johnny Hazard story from 1956 (Frank Robbins), and a classic 1938 Mandrake the Magician story. [\$2.95 direct-sales black-and-white magazine, ships in April]

EAGLE COMICS

Quality Comics has taken over the Eagle Comics line. See that listing for details

ECLIPSE COMICS

ALIEN TERROR IN 3-D #1

"Standard Procedure"
Story Art Bruce Jones Lee Weeks
"Sweet Dreams"
Story/Art Jordi Disz Castrillo
"Wishing World"
Story Art Mark Evanier John Pound
"It Was Just a Matter of Time"
Story Art Keith Tucker Dave Simons
Cover Tom Yeates
[\$2.50 3-D direct-sales comic; ships 4/29]

DNAGENTS #8

The hideous secret of Venimus is revealed. Includes a flashback sequence by Dan Splegla.
Story Art Mark Evanier Schauer & Blyberg
Cover Schauer & Jansen
[95¢ direct-sales Mando color comic; ships 4/29]

FEAR BOOK #1

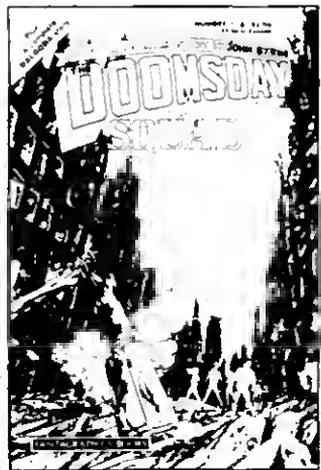
Stories by Steve Blissette and Rick Veitch
[\$1.75 direct-sales color comic, ships 4/22]

LASER ERASER... AND PRESSBUTTON #6

"The Corsairs of Illunium"
A tourist trap of a planet is also home to a pirate.
Story Art "Pedro Henry" Steve Dillon
[95¢ direct-sales Mando color comic; ships 4/29]

MIRACLEMAN #8
Story Alan Moore
Art Chuck Beckum
[95¢ direct-sales color Mando comic, ships 4/29]

FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

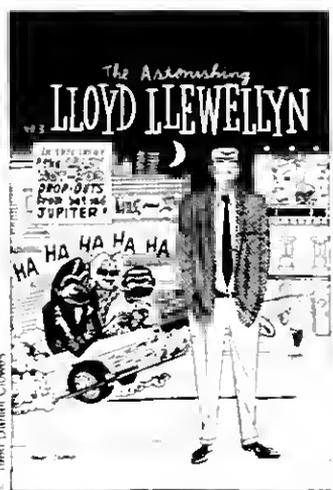


© 1986 John Byrne

DOOMSDAY SQUAD #1

"Doomsday!"
The bombs finally fall in this reprint of Doomsday #1.
Story Art Joe Gill John Byrne
Color Wheatley & Mayer

Plus a new eight-page Daigoda story by Jan Strnad and Dennis Fujitake. [\$2.00 direct-sales full-color comic, ships in late April]



© 1986 Daniel Clowes

LLOYD LLEWELLYN #3

"The Crazy Hot-Rod Dropouts from Beyond Jupiter!"
All by Daniel Clowes
[\$2.25 direct-sales black-and-white magazine, ships in late April]



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FIRST COMICS

AMERICAN FLAGG! #32

"That's Entertainment" continues, as everyone is after Flagg's underground TV station.
Story Steven Grant
Art Badger & Emberlin
[\$1.25 direct-sales Mando color comic; ships 4/11]

ENCHANTED APPLES OF OZ

Return to Oz in this all-new graphic novel.
All by Eric Shanower
[\$7.95 full-color graphic novel; ships last week in April]

JON SABLE, FREELANCE #39

All by Mike Grell
[\$1.75 direct-sales color comic, ships 4/18]

SHATTER #4

Shatter confronts Cyan as Unrath and the Alien Nation take on the combined forces of SSJ and the Artists' Underground.
Story Art Steven Grant Erwin & Dlenethal
Cover Steve Erwin
[\$1.75 direct-sales color comic, ships 4/18]

FISHWRAP

FISH POLICE #3

"The Seduction"
Story/Art Steve Moncuse
[\$1.50 direct-sales black-and-white comic, ships April]

HARRIER COMICS

REDFOX #3

"A Day in the Desert"
Story Mike Lewis
Art/Cover Fox
[\$1.75 direct-sales black-and-white comic, ships in April]

SWIFTSURE #8

Includes work by Jeff Anderson, James Collins, Dave Harwood, James Hill, Martin Lock, Steve Whitaker, and Steve Yeowell.
Cover Mike Farmer
[\$1.75 direct-sales black-and-white comic, ships April]

KITCHEN SINK PRESS

DEATH RATTLE #4

Featuring stories by Mike Baron and Rand Holmes, Jaxon, Doug Erb, and John Holland and Sam Kleth.

Cover Rand Holmes
 [\$2.00 direct-sales full-color comic; ships 4/23]

MEGATON MAN #9

The confrontation among the Russian Megaton Man, Captain Megaton Man, and the Golden Age Megaton Man.

Story/Art. Donald Simpson
 [\$2.00 direct-sales full-color comic; ships 4/23]

MARVEL COMICS



AVENGERS #270

The public protests Namor joining the group. Villain: Moonstone.

Story Roger Stern
 Art. J. Buscama & Palmar
 [75¢ color comic; ships 4/15; newsstand o/s 5/7]

CONAN THE BARBARIAN #185

Conclusion of the "Warlord of Koth" storyline. Final showdown with Tetra.

Story Jim Owsley
 Art/Cover. John Buscama
 Inks Ernie Chan
 [75¢ color comic; ships 4/15; newsstand o/s 5/7]

DOCTOR WHO #23

"Lunar Lagoon" by Parkhouse & Mick Austin; "An Unearthly Child" by Tom Quinn and Dicky Howe.
 [\$1.50 Baxter color comic; ships 4/22; newsstand o/s 5/14]

THE ETERNALS #11

Ikarus declares war on the Deviants in the penultimate issue.

Story Walt Simonson
 Art S. Buscama & Bulandl
 [75¢ color comic; ships 4/15; newsstand o/s 5/7]

FANTASTIC FOUR #293

Featuring the search for the Thing.
 Story/Pencils/Cover John Byrne
 Inks Al Gordon
 [75¢ color comic; ships 4/22; newsstand o/s 5/14]



G.I. JOE #50

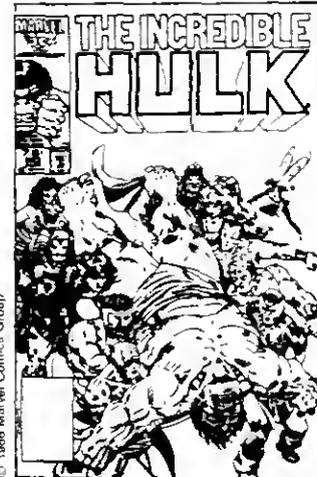
Double-sized issue. Back up story by Hama and Trimpe introducing "G.I. Joe Special Missions," an upcoming series.

Story Larry Hama
 Art. Whigham & Mushynsky
 [75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 4/15; newsstand o/s 5/7]

HOOKY

The long awaited Spider-Man Graphic Novel by Berni Wrightson.

Story. Susan K. Putney
 Art. Berni Wrightson
 [\$5.95 48-page full-color graphic novel; ships 4/22]



INCREDIBLE HULK #322

Story/Art/Cover. Al Milgrom
 Inks Bob Wlacek
 [75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 4/15; newsstand o/s 5/7]

IRON MAN #209

The return of the Living Laser, in a somewhat different form.

Story. Denny O'Neil
 Art. Bright & Akin/Garvey
 Cover. Bright/Akin & Garvey
 [75¢ color comic; ships 4/22; newsstand o/s 5/14]

MARVEL SAGA #9

Conclusion of the Angel's origin; Spidey meets the FF for the first time; Hulk meets FF for the first time.

Text. Peter Sanderson
 Cover. Frenz & Breeding
 [\$1.00 color comic; ships 4/15; newsstand o/s 5/7]

MARVEL TALES #190

"Spider-Man No More" reprinted from *Amazing Spider-Man* #50.

Story Stan Lee
 Art/Cover. John Romita
 [75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 4/15; newsstand o/s 5/7]

PETER PARKER, SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN #117

Guest starring the Black Cat, Doctor Strange and Luther (Deathlok) Manning in part 3 of the "Where is Spider-Man" storyline.

Story Peter David
 Art Buckler & McLeod
 Cover. Rich Buckler
 [75¢ color comic; ships 4/22; newsstand o/s 5/14]



THOR #370

Introducing Justice Peace, the lawman from the future.

Story Walt Simonson
 Art. Sal Buscema
 [75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 4/22; newsstand o/s 4/14]

TRANSFORMERS #19

Featuring the debut of the most requested Autobot of all—Omega Supreme.

Story Bob Budiansky
 Art Perlin & Williams
 Cover Herb Trimpa
 [75¢ color comic; ships 4/22; newsstand o/s 5/14]

X-FACTOR #7

Louise Simonson takes over as regular scripter, sending the team into new and unexpected directions.

Story Louise Simonson
 Art. Guice & Rubinstein
 Cover Joe Rubinstein
 [75¢ sales color comic; ships 4/22; newsstand o/s 5/14]

X-MEN #208

First of Two-Parter, with Rachel on the run from the X-Men, the Hellfire Club and Nimrod. Note: Several characters will be killed off in the course of this two parter.

Story Chris Claremont
 Art Romita, Jr. & Green
 [75¢ color comic; ships 4/15; newsstand o/s 5/7]

MARVEL EPIC COMICS

ALIEN LEGION #14

Sangar's sister is brutally assaulted and he must hunt down the psychopath responsible.

Story Alan Zelenetz
Art Stroman & Emberlin
Cover Stroman & Cirocco
[\$1.50 direct-sales color comic; ships 4/22]

DREADSTAR #25

Dreadstar and his rebel band go on trial for their crimes against the Instrumentality. The penultimate issue from Marvel.

Story/Pencils/Cover Jim Starlin
[\$1.50 direct-sales color comic; ships 4/15]

ELFOQUEST #13

Leetah goes on a quest to save Cutter and Skywise.

Story W. & R. Pini
Art Wendy Pini
[\$1.50 color comic; ships 4/22; newsstand o/s 5/14]

MARVEL STAR COMICS

DROIDS #3

Artoo and Threepio are trapped on the spaceship of Reddjak the space pirate!

Story Dave Manak
Art Romita, Sr. & Williamson
[\$1.50 newsstand color comic; ships 4/22; newsstand o/s 5/14]

TOP DOG #9

Top Dog & Heathcliff team-up!

Story Sid Jacobson
Art Kremer & Roettcher
[\$1.50 newsstand color comic; ships 4/22; newsstand o/s 5/14]

MATRIX GRAPHICS

NEW TRIUMPH #5

Story Mark Shainblum
Art Morrissette & Bofvin
[\$1.70 direct-sales black-and-white comic; ships in April]

MIRAGE STUDIOS

PRIME SLIME TALES #1

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Story Tony Basilicato
Art Jim Lawson
[\$1.50 direct-sales black-and-white comic; ships 4/15]

QUALITY COMICS



JUDGE DREDD #34
"Executioner"
Story John Wagner

Art Carlos Ezquerra
Cover Brian Bolland
[\$1.25 direct-sales Mando color comic; ships 4/29]

2000 A.D. MONTHLY #5

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THE GODS THEMSELVES
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He's *not* the blue-bird of happiness.

PREVIEW

By Heidi MacDonald



LIKE
ABAT
OUT OF
HELL...

Both demons and comic books can drop out of sight. Witness the *Demon* and *The Demon*.

The story of the *Demon* begins in 1972 when Jack Kirby created *The Demon* for DC, which starred Etrigan, a yellow-skinned minion of Hell. The *Demon* fought supernatural menaces under the orders of Merlin the enchanter while living with the human guise of demonologist Jason Blood, and was a character with a great deal of potential, but it was not one of Kirby's more successful books, and was cancelled after 16 issues.

Etrigan languished in DC Universe bit-player limbo for the next ten years or so, and was, in fact, thought best left forgotten by a lot of people. However, the *Demon* put in an electrifying appearance in a trilogy in Alan Moore's *Swamp Thing* this time talking in mock heroic verse (introduced by Len Wein, in one of Etrigan's guest shots) which Moore handled with his usual flair and aplomb. Suddenly, the *Demon* was hot again.

The story of *The Demon* mini-series begins in 1985. DC Comics was in the midst of planning a number of fresh approaches to old characters (Miller's *Batman* mini-series, Chaykin's *Shadow* mini, and *Trina Robbins* on *Wonder Woman*, to name a few). Enter Matt Wagner.

After a comparatively short time in the comics industry, Wagner has already established himself as one of the most innovative young writer/artists around with *Mage*, his highly personal fantasy series for Comico which has won plaudits for its imaginative storyline, and dynamic but naturalistic art.

Mage was Comico's first color comic, and in fact, their first real critical success. With the *Mage* bandwagon getting bigger all the time, Wagner heard that DC was looking for some new ideas, and decided to let them know that he was interested in doing a revamping of *Batgirl*. It turned out DC had already had plans for *Batgirl* in *Crisis*. However, Dick Giordano liked the idea of Wagner doing some work for DC and asked him to send in a list of other characters he might like to work on. By mutual consent, the choice was the *Demon*. As so often happens, serendipity played a part, as well.

To students of comic strip history, Kirby's Etrigan had a very familiar look: he was based visually on a sequence from Hal Foster's classic *Prince Valiant* strip, in which Val uses a goose skin to make a terrifying mask. However, while doing his research, Wagner ran across a reprint from the actual 15th century tome, *The Book Of Belial*, of a woodcut of a demon who looked an awful lot like Etrigan. Naturally intrigued,



Rich Rankin's inks on the first issue of *THE DEMON* were judged inappropriate.

Wagner used this as a major springboard for the entire story.

After suggesting the *Demon*, Wagner and DC agreed that he would write and pencil a four-issue mini-series, then scheduled to appear in the fall of 1985. Len Wein was the editor.

Searching for an Inker

But wait, there's more. Notice the words "pencil and write." Unmentioned is "inking." And therein lies the tale. The first inker scheduled for the mini-series was Rich Rankin, who's worked on several books for Comico, including *The Elementals* and Wagner's own "Grendel" backup feature in *Mage* (of which more anon).

Wagner wrote and pencilled the first issue, and Rankin inked it, and the pages were sent to DC. But there was a problem with the inks. The mini-series was taken off the schedule and DC called in its bullpen artist, Alfredo Alcalá to re-ink the book.

A stylish draughtsman of the Philippine school and one of the finest inkers working today, Alcalá's style and Wagner's were, nonetheless, not quite a marriage made in Heaven.

At this point Wagner was on the road during his long cross-country *Mage* Tour last year which took him and companions Sean Knight, Bill Cuccinotta, and John Riccio, to com-

ics shops literally from coast to coast. Returning home after a full slate of adventures on the road, Wagner saw the re-inked pages, and was none too happy with them, feeling the inks overpowered the pencils. "I enjoy Alfredo's stuff," says Wagner, "but he just generally tends to override whoever he's inking."

After Wagner marked some changes he wanted, the inked pages were sent back to Alcalá for corrections. Then fate stepped in once more—the pages were lost in the mail, and *Demon* was without an inker again.

Time passed. Finally a new inker was assigned to the book: Art Nichols. And a new editor, Denny O'Neil. This is a team that Wagner feels comfortable with, and though still not on the schedule, *The Demon* is at least back on track.

Who Is Jason Blood?

Given the interest in mythology and Arthurian legends that Wagner displays in *Mage*, it's not too hard to see what attracted him to the *Demon*.

"[He's a] great character. There's an incredible premise, Merlin's guardian *Demon*. We all have wonderful images in the back of our minds of Merlin. [But there's] a nice little paradox here of this nasty *demon* who was supposed to be working for the force of good." Wagner compares

the Demon to the Hulk as a character who is out of control. And yet with the Hulk, "his things always end up [okay], even though he would bash shit up left and right, nobody ever got hurt. Things always turned out well in the end. Kirby had a few little things—although things always turned out well in *The Demon*, there were certain scenes where the Demon would almost rage, and then be brought back under control by Merlin. That was kind of neat. I always liked that.

"Secondly, he's a dark, mysterious, cloaked kind of character. I loved that. Always have. Mike Golden drew him incredibly well in two stories [in *Batman Family*]. And then Alan Moore comes out and does an incredible re-creating of the character. So it always struck me as a character with a lot of potential, but it had never been expressed."

There are quite a few vague spots in the original which Wagner will be working with, beginning with the way that Etrigan's origin was never really explained, other than the fact that he was serving Merlin, and protecting Camelot from Morgan le Fay. "I suppose Merlin just called him out of Hell to help him protect Camelot. And that's about it. He doesn't give much more background info."

Whether Jason Blood is a real person or not is one of the major changes that Wagner has made. "In Kirby's version, Etrigan is Jason

Blood, or I guess I should say Jason Blood is Etrigan. Jason Blood is just an illusion that Etrigan has cast on himself which always made it hard for me to sympathize with Jason Blood. He's not even real, so who cares? I changed it around a little to where I thought that Jason Blood was a human who was possessed." As Wagner had adjusted it, at the fall of Camelot, Merlin ordered his demon to "hide himself" and "Etrigan dove into a human being that happened to be coming by" an innocent bystander named Jason Blood. "So the whole series tends to deal with the possession of Jason Blood, and the binding and controlling of demons."

Jason Blood hasn't had a very easy 500 years of it, due to Etrigan's unguestlike behavior. "He really doesn't know much about himself or his past. Etrigan has just been screwing up Jason's life for centuries and centuries." This includes some massive memory lapses. As Kirby set it up, Jason had lived a number of past lives, which he can only vaguely recall, and his apartment contained "all these mysterious portraits that all looked like him, way back to medieval times, but he really doesn't remember his former lives. That was never explained."

Wagner won't quite clear it up either. "I just write it off that Jason is Etrigan's plaything now. His memory of his past is always a jumble.

Etrigan has access to his memory and so he plays with it and leaves in things he likes and [takes out things] he doesn't like of course, that's going to leave a very chaotic mess of things left for Jason Blood. Etrigan is Merlin's servant and supernatural watch dog in the world. As a result of that, Etrigan gets sent around here and there, on trouble-shooting assignments for Merlin. Jason just gets yanked along for the ride, and has been getting yanked along for the ride for a long time."

An Angry Adolescent

However, Etrigan has problems of his own. As Wagner sees things, Etrigan is really just an angry young demon. "I consider the Demon an adolescent. [He was] trapped in a human shell for five or six hundred years. His growth has been stunted for a long time. He's pent up. He's at that adolescent stage. Remember when you were an adolescent, you were just crazy. You think back and you [realize] how clear you weren't thinking at that time. Everyone's body is just packed full of explosions of hormones. He's just ****ing insane. That's why he talks in this bizarre verse. So he's someone whose power is waiting to mature but has been held off for a long time and so when it does mature will do so at a cancerous rate.

In this scene from the *DEMON* mini-series, Glenda transforms Jason Blood into The Demon.





AND, SO ONCE
AGAIN THE WORDS
OF METERED
RHYME...

FLING THE
FETTER'D WAIF
OF HELL...

...ETRIGAN!!

10

"There are three personalities [operating]. There's Jason Blood, there's Etrigan, and then there's sort of an in-betweener, where Jason has these moody bouts and uses some sorceries and Etrigan speaks through him, but he's never really Etrigan through and through, with the horns and tusks and so on."

As urbane demonologist Jason Blood, the Demon picked up the usual set of supporting characters, including Randu, a UN diplomat who had ESP, and best friend Harry Matthews, "who was almost a caricature of Kirby himself. A big Jack Klugman-type guy who smokes lots of cigars, very brash. And Glenda, Jason's girlfriend, who is your stock Kirby heroine, blond, big-eyed, and always wondering what the hell is going on, until the very last issue of the Kirby series, she shows a little spunk." However, Glenda will play a key role in the mini-series, as Wagner is going to upgrade her role.

"The only thing [in Kirby's *Demon*] that was shown about Glenda personality-wise, was her inexplicable attraction to Jason Blood. She's always over at Jason's apartment saying, 'There's something about Jason, but I don't what it is.' She's intrigued with him for some reason. No reason, really, that I can figure out. That's what I keep playing up. She's a little dippy at times, simply because that's the way she impressed me. But here I'm trying to give her a bit of a purpose so now she has a purpose and she's striving towards it."

Glenda's sole moment of glory in the old series came in the last issue, when she used the Philosopher's Stone to fight Morgan le Fay: "This girl who'd been a model through the whole series, suddenly starts doing some spunky stuff." In Wagner's *Demon* Glenda will have her spunk quotient upped quite a bit, although, "every once in a while, like at the end [of the first issue], for all her 'C'mon Jason, let's get you out of here' philophy, she freezes up like a stone when the action starts."

In fact, as the story opens, Glenda is bound and determined to cure Jason. "She's always been kind of running around and coming into Jason's life with this Kirby-type of 'ohh something's wrong I just know it!' outlook, and that was the only thing I could get, that she had this overriding interest in Jason Blood but she really knew nothing about him but kept thrusting her little self back into his life again and again and again." Despite her determination, Glenda is a bit taken aback when she finally starts to "realize the implications of it, and thinks 'Wow, did I really want to do this? This is a demon!'"

Searching for a Cure



Glenda's snooping around Jason's apartment has uncovered not only the Philosopher's Stone—an immensely powerful artifact, which, in Kirby's series, Jason was prone to leaving lying around his place—but also a book in Jason's library with a picture of a demon much like Etrigan. But Jason can't see the picture, due to a baffling magical blinding which prevents him from seeing the illustration, rather like the way Etrigan has prevented him from remembering his past, but not necessarily caused by Etrigan.

"That's the whole point to the story," says Wagner. "Who is at the root of Jason's problems? Is it Merlin, is it Etrigan, is it some other force? He just doesn't know who to trust and he has all these inputs from all different sides." Jason Blood is a very confused man, confused about who he is, what he is, where's he's been and what he's doing.

"The main character is Glenda, because I think most of the story is told through her eyes. Jason is a little less sympathetic. You can understand where he's coming from, but he's quick to make decisions. I couldn't always make the same decisions he makes. He's very driven and anxious by this point and eager to accept any answers he can get, often without discretion as to whether they're viable or safe or anything like that. Whereas Glenda's a little more identifiable, because you can see her doubt."

As for Randu and Harry, "Harry has a very major role [in #13] but Randu's out of town."

Mysteries of the Demons

There are lots of mysteries to clear up in *The Demon*. First off, there's the causes of Jason's problems. There's also the identity of the book's two unknown narrators. Wagner will also delve into the workings of the Philosopher's Stone, how it obeys Merlin, and why Glenda seems to be

able to use it so well. Merlin and other supernatural forces will play major roles in the story.

As the tale opens, Glenda and Jason are searching for the actual Book of Belial, and any clues it might offer as to the sources of Jason's problems. Glenda uses the Philosopher's Stone to trace it to the ruins of Tintagel Castle in Cornwall, where Merlin has moved his tomb, but they run afoul of some unpleasant demon-types, who kidnap Glenda.

"I don't have a lot of super bad guys," Wagner, "all of the nasty elements of the book are demons. The demon Belial will ultimately make an appearance and have a very, very crucial role. I tend to work with the idea that there's a strict hierarchy in Hell, there are lords and servants and all manner of demons." Demons beside Belial who appear include the Clinchers, demons that have their hands on backwards, all the better to strangle with, demons who spit stomach bile, and stone gargoyles. However, "I'm tending to keep a check on that to where it's not every other panel there's supernatural creatures ripping through."

"The whole point is humans messing around with the supernatural and how that'll really screw you up. Especially if they really don't know what they're doing, which is what the case is here. They're doing it more out of desperation and in Glenda's case some sort of bizarre apathetic boredom."

Despite the changes from the original *Demon*, Wagner has consciously worked within the boundaries of the earlier appearances. "I had to work with what was there, and come up with a storyline from what Kirby already had. I wanted to take what he had and refine it, not come up with something entirely new and bizarre, not like I said, 'No, Etrigan is really an alien trapped in this body!'"

The Hero Discovered

The Demon is a change for Wagner from *Mage*, which is a very personal story, beginning with the close physical resemblance of Wagner and Kevin Matchstick. "I go through *Mage* and I see a lot of the things. I'll read #3 or 4 and I'll remember what was happening to me at that point in my life. I remember thinking, it's obviously why I plotted it like that. Whereas the *Demon* and *Grendel* aren't quite as much like that, they aren't quite so reflective."

Consequently, he has very different approaches to *Mage*, *Demon* and *Grendel*. "In a year I've gotten very adept at that, since I've been doing *Mage* and *Grendel* and now this. I've gotten adept because they're entirely different. Each is nothing like the



Mage: The hero discovered.

other one. It takes a lot of steam to halt this train of thought, redirect the damn thing over here, shoot it off over there. Mage is cut down to the dry bone. Mage goes with the theory of cut out all the crap. I want Mage so that when you get to the first page it picks you up, shoots you through and all of a sudden you're through before you realize it.

"Demon is a lot more narrative. It's my exercise in trying captions and a whole lot more dialog. It's personal in that it's me trying to expand myself to new horizons and not get locked into [one mind set]."

While the date of the *The Demon's* appearance is yet another mystery, Mage is drawing to the conclusion of the first trilogy, and a new *Grendel* series is on the drawing boards for summer release. In addition, Dunning books will publish the entire Mage Saga in a two-volume Eliquest-type trade paperback form. And as all good Mage fans know, this is only the first third of Kevin Matchstick's story.

Since this part is subtitled "The Hero Discovered," will we have discovered a lot by the end?

"Yeah, Kevin will have discovered a lot. He's [not so much] discovering these things now, as admitting them to himself. If you'll notice, he's going along with things more, which is something I think we all do whether you tend to believe in something or encourage it or whatever. Often in life you find yourself going along with something that you hadn't really thought of. That's just the way of things. You have to deal with outside stimulus. So the first volume deals with this tendency I think everybody has to want to be isolated, the attitude of why me, which everybody feels to a certain extent in different varieties and in different intensities.

But the whole point is well why not you? Who makes you think you deserve any different? This is all we have, this is all anybody has, and everybody has to deal with it."

When asked why he chose to do a story as personal as Mage, Wagner takes a long pause. "I think the decision came, why do anything else, really? Mage is like, pure creative comics for me, it's the one thing where I get to sit down and do exactly what I want to do. But also, in doing exactly what you want to do, you realize that there are other things you want to do, and maybe exactly what you thought you wanted to do isn't everything you wanted to do. So the reason I decided to make it personal is it's what basically my first effort in color and what I thought was going to be my big launch into the comics field. I didn't want to do anything stock. I wanted to do something that had a lot of breadth and personality to it, and the best way to do that was to do something that was extremely dear.

"That's one of the things I try to do with Mage. I try to make it a good comic. I try to contrast it multidimensionally, so that if you're just looking for an adventure story, that's there. If you're just looking for human interest story that's there. If

Sprites and Gracklefints, definitely draws on mythology, and classic fantasy literature for its inspiration, but as far as influences to, "I can't say anyone of them is exact. It's all a feel." He mentions that quality of Celtic magic as one of his magic goals. "They have a real sad glory. I'm trying to incorporate some of that into it. Those tales have a little bit of everything in them. I try and fit a little despair, a little thinking, a little action, a little betrayal, a little self-doubt. There's a lot of that in all of us. They're very very human tales. For all their [glory], the tales of Cuchulain, they aren't even humans, those are gods, and yet those are passions and feelings they have are very, very human. They have human failing and misgivings, and so I try to fit that into this. Magic abounds here."

However, Mage fans will have a long wait after the first series winds up. "I don't know [when the second series will appear.] I've no plans past the end of #15. I've got to get to the end of the series and take some time off for my head and work on the Grendel story that I'm going to be writing, and then that's just going to be it for a while. I have a few more projects in mind, but Mage II isn't going to be around for another couple of years yet, I would say, you



A sequence from MAGE #12, with inks by Sam Kieth.

you're looking for something with a deep mythological base, that's there. If you're for a lot of mystery, that's there, because I don't give away a lot of shit. You're still guessing over a lot of stuff. And a lot of people write to me and say 'I know what's going on, I know's who's who,' but nobody's gotten it right yet. A lot of them are real close, and a lot of them have that right but not this."

Mage, with its Fisher Kings, Umbra

hear this with every type of fantasy trilogy or tetralogy or whatever, that each part should be readable on its own. I'm really trying to shoot for that.

"By the end of the trilogy, Kevin is really quite old, white hair, probably bald by that point, and he is the only consistent character [in all three volumes.] Well, there is one other, but I can't tell you who that is. He's the only character that goes through

it. There's a tremendous amount of changes." In the next few issues, two popular characters die, and will be gone for good. "I'm not here to regurgitate these character on the populace over and over. These characters enter Kevin's life and take him through changes, and you lose people, is what it comes down to. You can't hold onto everybody. Some people you lose mentally and emotionally and some you lose physically, and that's the kind of thing that is going to happen. A lot of people come into Kevin's life and it's going to change dramatically. He'll be much more secure and solid in his power next time, and then in the third one he'll be almost drowning in his power, that's the best way to put it."

With the end of *Mage*, Wagner will be writing *Grendel*, a new color series which will feature the amoral assassin who was Wagner's first character for comics. We'll be seeing a new person in the Grendel suit, however, a woman, and there will be other major changes in the book. Newcomer Arnold Pander will pencil, while Jay Threat Geldhof inks.

"It's a little soap operatic, just taking the lives of these characters and totally messing them up, the worst possible things I can do to these people to make them psychologically twisted and impaired. Which is the basic thrust behind *Grendel*, psychological twisting and perversion. There'll be some supernatural, and some crime, and superhero, with the fact that *Grendel*'s a masked and costumed cloaked figure, but I wouldn't say it would be specifically crime or anything. I'm trying to leave that loose. I guess Machiavellian is a good description for you, the whole theory of reach out and control your environment simply because you can. If you can do it, do it, none of this bullshit about morals, which is what Machiavelli said all governments do. We're wrapping all these governments into one little *Grendel*!"

Methods

As the above discussion shows, like Wagner's other work, *The Demon* will focus on the various emotional motivations of the characters. "I think that's the primary point of my work, as opposed to the plotting or anything else. Whatever I do next I'm going to spend some time developing my plot lines hoping that they work better and more smoothly. I just want the mechanics to work well together. As it is now I think I'm getting a good grip on character motivation and trying to make it very real, but still think I need a lot of work on plot."

One of the trademarks of Wagner's storytelling is his ability to draw long conversations which are every bit as

dynamic, if not more so, than conventional comics 'action' scenes. How does he approach them? "I draw it first, basically knowing what they're going to say, and then go through it and look at the faces when I'm getting ready to do the script, and often it will tell me a line that the character will say that I wouldn't have picked up on initially. That helps tie together the visuals and the script to the point where you can get away with talking heads for nine, ten pages without having it seem boring. They're in sync like that, and the story moves regardless of what the action is or lack of action."

Although Wagner is aware of the traditional comics fight devices, he's wary of them. "So much of it's been done. Why would you want to film *Cone With the Wind* again. God, how many superhero battles have there been? You've gotta give them a new twist. Not that there won't be more battles. People are going to fight until the end of time. But it won't be the same fight over and over again. It won't be Spider-Man baiting those guys... that's one of the things I use [in *The Demon*]. I use a nar-

ator [so] I can do away with that extraneous fight dialog, and say, 'Now look at this!'"

Wagner has already developed a highly individualistic approach to his work. "What I try on all levels is just not to talk down. How capable am I of coming up with an idea that these people aren't going to understand? Anything that I can conceive they can conceive, too. And I try to keep that. I try not to place myself in a position where I can lose my objectivity, all holy and revelational. I'm searching around as much as anybody else."

Did he want to be a writer as a child?

"Yeah... I did. But I think I wanted to be an artist first. It came down to wanting to make images, and as I grew and started to delve into more sophisticated image making, I realized that just a single image wasn't going to do it for me. I had to do images that connected into ideas. And eventually ideas that connected into stories. So I guess now, I'm a story teller. I don't think comics will be the only place I'll tell stories. Hopefully I'll branch out and have

A sampling of Matt Wagner's pencils for the *DEMON* mini-series, before inking.





stories to tell in other mediums. But right now, comics are right there and a good love."

As of this writing, *The Demon* has yet to be put on the schedule, though *Grendel* and the Donning Mage reprints are on their way. However, Wagner doesn't want to make many plans beyond the end of *Mage*, preferring to take a rest.

"I won't have any published artwork [for a while] after the end of *Mage*. I might do writing and inking. Take some time off and do some painting and sculpting for myself, and get away. I noticed for the last two and a half years I only buy the same damn art supplies, pencil leads [and so on], and I realized that it's becoming a real form. I've got to

break away from that a little bit and branch out."

As for *The Demon*, he sums it up quite succinctly. "The story makes a viable change in the character in the end, makes a decisive step, and yet still leave it way open for continuation. I'm trying to give you a full serving on this and yet leave you still hungry for more." ●

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He Who Waits . . .

THE DEMON



Camelot was dead—as dead as the armored legends whose bodies littered its streets, overrun by the blood-thirsty pawns of an immortal sorceress. High above the carnage, the flames of the citadel outlined two figures atop the charred husk of a once-mighty battlement. One was an old man of impressive height, whose peaked cap and flowing white beard left no doubt as to his identity. Merlin, the greatest wizard of all time, ripped a leaf from the massive gilt-edged book he clutched and spoke above the sounds of battle:

"I will soon vanish with Camelot, faithful guardian! I've give you a torn

HERO HISTORY By J. Vance

part of this tabled book. Keep it with you! It is to be your destiny—on Earth!"

Hardly an afterthought, that phrase "on Earth," for as the flames' fierce glow revealed, our Earth was not—could not be—the natural habitat of the one called Etrigan: crouching, yellow-skinned, his bald forehead adorned with two small horns, Merlin's "faithful guardian" was nothing less than a demon from Hell.

Through ghastly fangs the creature rasped, "Till once more I am summoned!"—and leaped from the ruined fortress, which moments later disappeared in a thunderous explosion as Merlin vanished from the sight of man, scattering the invading army like ants in a gale. And in a wood nearby, the grim form of a mortal man who had once been the demon Etrigan strode into the night, passing with Camelot into legend, "never to be seen again."

. . . until 1972, when another sorcerer—the one men call Jack Kirby—brought Etrigan back to raging, howling lie in a series of wild adventures

which, though short-lived, nevertheless managed to capture the imaginations of fans and other creators in a way few failures ever have. And make no mistake: in commercial terms, Kirby's *Demon* series was a failure, lasting only 16 issues before vanishing into the limbo populated by such four-color also-rans as *Prez*, *Spyman* and *Super Green Beret*. But *The Demon* has proved to be fittingly immortal, not only re-emerging triumphantly from the land of funny-book 4-F's, but—as we shall see—consistently engaging the talents of some of the greatest names in comics along the way.

The Awakening

By the time *The Demon* #1 appeared on the stands, Kirby's much-trumpeted early '70s sojourn at DC was in full swing with his "Fourth World" tetralogy of *Jimmy Olsen*, *The Forever People*, *Mr. Miracle*, and *The New Gods*, a group of titles as tightly interwoven as any in the Marvel continuity web. A readership that had just become accustomed to the high-tech barbarians of the Apokolips saga was perhaps justifiably confused by the initial adventures of Etrigan, a totally unrelated series featuring a hellish "hero" unlike any they had seen before—Marvel's "Son of Satan," a similar character, would not appear for another year—and whose appearance seemed even more evil than Darkseid's. (At that, they could have counted themselves fortunate, for they were nearly given an Etrigan even uglier than the one that saw print. The original design was a furry-faced, scaly creature with clawed hands and feet; the final version was inspired by a battlemask in an old *Prince Valiant* strip which Kirby happened across while researching Hal Foster's treatment of Camelot.)

Readers of the first issue, titled "Unleash the One Who Waits," were immediately whisked from the final days of Arthur into the 20th century and the Gothic home of eccentric old Warly, an authority on magic. Before him stood hatchet-faced Jason Blood, a young man whose flaming red hair bore a distinctive white streak, and whose independent means provided him with the freedom to pursue an even more distinctive line of work: demonologist. In Blood's hand is a torn scrap of parchment bearing the inscription, "Yarva Etrigan Daemonicus"—"I summon the demon Etrigan."

A quest for the meaning of this arcane artifact has become an obsession with young Blood, who tells us in no uncertain terms, "A demon haunts my dreams! A demon haunts my life!" His search has led him to Warly, who inexplicably launches a

"I BELIEVE THAT ONE 'MAN-FIGURE' PADING INTO THE MISTS OF THE CENTURIES, THAT 'SAGA' GUY... FOR HE BECAME THE PRYER OF WINTER... AND... HE DECIDED THE... OF THE YEARS... WHO STALKED HIS 'PRA... CROSS... AND... OF... W... AND... AGAIN! FOR HE WAS THE WAY TO... MERLIN AND THE 'ETERNITY BOOK.' HE WAS THE 'ONE WHO WAITS.' HE WAS...



sorcerous attack. Dumbfounded, the demonologist defends himself gamely, but he ultimately slumps unconscious to the floor—whereupon another player enters the scene.

The mastermind behind these mysterious doings is none other than Morgaine LeFey, the witch whose forces had razed fabled Camelot over a thousand years ago. Now she is dying—her beautiful features withered to those of a mummy—and desperate for the life-restoring spells in Merlin's Eternity Book, of which Blood's "Etrigan" fragment is a portion.

Blood regains consciousness on the grounds of the estate, to find the house a burnt-out ruin... and Warly no more than a local legend, having perished in the fire which had claimed his house years ago! Shaken and confused, Blood returns to his Gotham City apartment, where we are quickly introduced to the rest of the continuing cast of characters:

Randu Singh, a bearded United Nations delegate under whose turban pulses a brain gifted with extra-

sensory powers, and whose well-toned muscles are kept in shape through regular wrestling bouts with Jason Blood.

Harry Matthews, wisecracking Gotham advertising executive, smoker of the obligatory Kirby cigar, and possessor of the kind of tubelike nose unseen in comics since the artist's pre-Fantastic Four days.

And Glenda Mark, blonde stranger to the group, invited as Jason Blood's blind date by Randu's wife Gomali (who vanished from the series after this single appearance). It is Glenda, wandering through Blood's weirdly-appointed apartment, who comments upon the uncanny resemblance between the demonologist and the many portraits of his ancestors.

Blood points out one of them, "done by old man Van Rijn. He was quite good"—but, when quizzed about his casual familiarity with the centuries-dead Rembrandt, he is at a loss to explain. (The reader is in a slightly better position, having overheard the conversation that



passed between Warly—"I believe we've caught our fierce young fox once more"—and LeFey—"His loss of memory ever betrays him! It makes him hunger for his true identity!"—while Blood was unconscious.)

There is little time to ponder, though, as a sudden knock at the door breaks the mood of the gathering and forever alters the lives of those assembled, for the caller is revealed to be an eight-foot giant whose topcoat, scarf, and shades are but a ludicrous attempt to hide the fact that his massive body is composed of solid stone.

The party evaporates, this sudden appearance having put an understandable damper on the festivities. After his friends' departure, Blood seizes an ancient scroll the silent newcomer has brought, his sense of wonder growing as he reads. To Blood, this is a moment of epiphany: "Witchcraft, demonology, sorcery—the world behind those words is coming alive for me!" ... and follow-

ing the instructions in the scroll, he commands the giant to take him to castle Branek. Believing that he has begun the adventure of his life, Jason Blood has no inkling that he has in fact sealed his fate irrevocably.

Unaware that all has been observed by LeFey, the strange pair embark for Central Europe, where they are soon tearing on horseback through tiny Moldavia, leaving superstitious villagers cowering in their wake. Through rain and lightning they drive their mounts, across blasted moorland and ragged hillsides, finally reining up in the courtyard of the ominous castle.

A glow emanating from an underground crypt beckons Jason Blood. Descending, he finds an ancient tomb surrounded by stone gargoyles. Like the strange messenger who had brought him here, they suddenly come to life, surrounding him for a frightening moment before returning to their frozen posts. He has passed inspection, but toward what end?

All is revealed in the next few seconds, as Blood translates an inscription graven deeply into the slab of the tomb:

"Change! Change, O form of man!
"Release the might from fleshy mire!

"Boil the blood in heart of fire!
"Gone! Gone! The form of man!
"Rise, the demon Etrigan!"

And he does. Where once stood a mortal seeker of demons now crouches the very object of his quest. The demon who haunts his dreams—Etrigan, the hellish servant of the wizard Merlin—is Jason Blood himself.

LeFey and her minions burst into the crypt, having followed Blood to the hidden site. The Eternity Book is within her grasp—and with it, the ultimate power she has sought since the fall of Camelot.

"But," the final caption screams as fanged Etrigan whirls to meet them, "demons cannot be stopped when unleashed! What had been Jason Blood explodes with fury into the twentieth century!"

Quite simply, "Unleash the One Who Waits" is a smashing origin, introducing a "hero" of unlimited potential, his full supporting cast, and sufficient exposition to grease the wheels of the entire series, all within a 24-page story that moves with the breakneck pace of a James M. Cain novel.

The Master

The concepts behind Kirby's Apokolips stories had been consistently exciting, but the actual writing had often left a good deal to be desired, especially in sequences devoted to character, where the final product occasionally read more like first-draft notes than polished dialogue. Readers who had grown up with Stan Lee's overly-detailed dialogue and DC's lavish "Editor's Notes" found much of Kirby's writing disappointingly sparse and confusing.

The Demon was an exception, though. Demonstrating a happy marriage of approach and subject matter, the adventures of Jason Blood were relatively free from the awkwardness that had plagued Darkseid and company. Kirby's often frustrating penchant for inserting oblique comments or seemingly pointless action actually contributed in this case to the air of mystery that permeated the series. To be sure, the scripts still contained their share of off-the-wall dialogue, and obviously frightened characters would still cry out a needless "I'm frightened!" from time to time; but the archetypal approach to characterization that had never seemed quite right in the "Fourth World" books felt absolutely right



when applied to Etrigan. Kirby the writer had come a long way since beginning his stint at DC, just two years earlier.

The art worked better, too. Fans who had drooled over Kirby's Fantastic Four work when inked by the elegant Joe Sinnott could feel at home when the initial Apokolips books began with embellishment by Marvel veteran Vince Colletta. As the comparatively rough-hewn inks of Mike Royer began to appear, the shock proved simply too great for many readers.

Royer's rendering does at times look as though it were accomplished with a wood-burning set instead of a brush. All the same, the vilification to which he has been subjected is hardly fair, especially in the case of *The Demon*, a feature in which smooth, lovely linework would have been an absolute detriment. The final effect was the closest realization of the original art one could ask for, considering the pressures of turning out several complete books a month, of a creator's total vision—seemingly undiluted Kirby. The horrors and plug-uglies who populated the world of that vision were presented just as they had been conceived; the patented Kirby page 2-page 3 double spreads were given meticulous care, if anything gaining a muscular power that had been lacking under other inkers—in short, the art of Jack Kirby was displayed in the manner Jack Kirby wanted. And it was very good art, indeed.

The Peak

Issue #2 wrapped up the origin tale, with Etrigan using his greatest power—the firing of bolts of "demon-flame" from his fingertips—to wipe out the revived Lefevé's coven of witches in a satanic blast of A-bomb proportions. Morgaine vanishes ambiguously in the time-honored tradition of master villains. Harry and Randu learn their friend's hideous secret, and Blood is left to ponder the sobering fact that the life he had thought his own is merely a construct devised to house the soul of a savage demon.

"Savage" was the keynote—practically the only note—in the early issues' characterization of Etrigan. Obviously playing in a different league than the run-of-the-mill superhero, he was totally devoid of the motivational trappings (usually either guilt, vengeance, or altruism) that propelled most of his unconsuited fellows into their adventures. The Demon required no reason to fly with all fours into the midst of his enemies, dancing on their heads, rending with his claws; he was simply a consummate sociopath who knew no mercy, even threatening the



lives of his supporting cast on several occasions.

The specific extent of his abilities was left up in the air, too. Aside from the aforementioned hellfire, he seemed to possess no other powers than abnormal strength and stamina, although one suspected that this barely-articulate thing from hell kept a few more tricks up his ruffled cuff, held in reserve for a particularly nasty surprise. It was, in fact, this supreme nastiness that was to prove to be The Demon's most awesome power.

As for his alter-ego, the slightly excitable young man who had presented himself to Wally was forever gone. From *The Demon* #2 on, a terse stoicism would rule Blood's existence. Except in times of emergency, rarely would he more than acknowledge his other self in passing, leaving the commentary on his dilemma to Harry and Randu. In fact, during the first few issues he did not even know how to bring Etrigan forth when one of those emergencies arose, it usually having been left up to Randu to chant the Macbeth-inspired incantation. To the casual reader, it may have seemed that once Etrigan had been released from his slumber, Jason Blood had ceased to be anything more than a one-dimensional character whose sole function was to open the door for the series' true protagonist—a grown-up Billy Batson without so much as a "Holy Moley" to set him apart from anyone else.

Not true—at least, not at the beginning, as early issues showed us hints of the terror that gnawed at Blood's soul, held at bay through grim-lipped determination during his waking hours but exploding in dreams from which he frequently awoke screaming. So he was introduced in *Demon* #3, another non-

stop thriller involving a cult bent on "de-incarnating" innocent people into the least human of their earlier lives. Into the resulting swarm of neanderthals, medieval executioners and murderous buccaneers waded Etrigan, whose resolution of the problem was blunt and highly effective. Diverting the spell from its intended victims, he transformed the leader of the cult into the most surprising incarnation of the entire story—the tiny insect the villain had been in a previous life. Without a second's hesitation, the Demon brought the tale to a close with one contemptuous stamp of his foot!

Issues 4 and 5 formed another two-part tale which began with narration by Merlin, a rather confusing device that had been employed throughout the series. Here the sorcerer opens with the revelation that "I still live, unknown to man—but only as a voice!—a voice that commands power that reaches into worlds other than man's!" Following that voice, Etrigan begins his wooliest adventure yet, following the trail of the Kamara, a white monkeylike creature whose innocuous appearance conceals a truly monstrous nature.

The Kamara is a thing that feeds on fear, which it generates by assuming the form of terrors dredged from its victims' own minds, literally scaring them to death. By the time Jason Blood encounters the beast in his own apartment, the countryside surrounding Gotham has become littered with corpses, and it appears that Harry is to be next, for the Kamara has taken the shape of the ad-man's greatest fear—a dragon. (It would have seemed far more likely that the urban Matthews would reserve his terror for muggers or J.R.S. auditors—but neither would have been nearly as much fun for Kirby to draw.)

It is Blood, though, who is finally seized in the monster's talons and borne off into the night. Attempting the long-distance mental contact with which he has summoned Etrigan in the past, Randu finds his psychic powers blocked by a mysterious force, leaving the demon's mortal half at the mercy of the Kamara.

Still in dragon form, it sets Blood down in the Transylvanian duchy of Troilsac, a primitive region ruled by a tyrannical medievalist who styles himself The Iron Duke. It is here we discover that the Kamara is under the control of a powerful witch called Ugly Meg, who has engineered the creature's bloodbath simply as a ruse to draw Etrigan into the open. At the Iron Duke's imperious command, Meg banishes the Kamara to another plane and prepares to do away with Blood—when a voice rings out from offstage, bringing the demonologist's inhuman self to the fore—and even



From **THE DEMON** #5: Merlin and the Demon are re-united.

as horns begin to sprout on Jason's head, his master steps out of the shadows. For the first time since the fall of Camelot, Merlin walks the earth.

It is only through the advanced sorcery of Meg that she and the Duke escape Etrigan's wrath—but having materialized in order to right the imbalance of nature that has given her such stunning power, Merlin is determined to see this confrontation to the end. Transforming the Duke's abandoned horse into a winged steed, he and his demon give chase. They are soon soaring over the walls of the Duke's castle—whereupon they are struck down by Meg's "fumes of mortality," an aptly-named spell that reverts Etrigan back to human form, and reduces Merlin to a powerless old man. Both are whisked away to the Duke's torture chamber, where they awake in heavy chains.

Neither the rapid-fire storyline of the two-part origin nor the even more frantically-paced third issue had allowed much time to focus upon Etrigan himself, leaving only sketchy impressions of a character who resembled nothing so much as Warner Bros.' Tasmanian Devil, a spitting, claving, amoral whirlwind whose alignment until now with the forces of good had been less a matter of choice than of chance. In issue 5, with the entrance of Merlin, much of the pattern Kirby had been weaving through suggestion and innuendo was thrown into focus. After four issues of Hulk-like Berserker rages, we were shown an Etrigan capable of self-restraint and even articulate conversation when in the presence of one he deemed worthy of his respect. His seemingly instinctive behavior turned out to have been governed by intelligence all along,

bringing a welcome sense of order to the rather insane anarchy that had appeared to rule the day in previous issues.

(It was also even more unsettling than before, when one stopped to think about it. In the case of Marvel's green giant, to whom Etrigan was occasionally compared, booming out "Hulk smash!" and tossing a few tanks around was little more than a knee-jerk reflex; when Kirby's Demon leaped at you, screaming "Die! Die!" you now knew that he'd actually given it some thought—he truly wanted you to die.)

Inprisoned with his master in the Duke's dungeon, it was now equally certain that someone wanted *him* dead. Considering that the actions of Etrigan were never more than blank spots in his memory, Jason Blood handled the situation into which he had awakened with remarkable aplomb as Meg and the Iron Duke arrived to set the final stage of their scheme into motion. Unleashing the Kamara upon helpless humanity, the abduction of Jason Blood, the wild flight to the Duke's castle—all had been part of their plan to lure Merlin back to corporeal form, in order to transfer the magician's now-dormant powers into the mad monarch's body. Thick vapors fill the room as the process is begun, and by the time they have cleared, yet another twist has been added to this convoluted tale: having secretly intended all along to take Merlin's power for herself, Meg has transformed her erstwhile employer into a real Iron Duke, a metallic "mannikin" which must obey her every whim. The vengeful witch orders it to eliminate the now useless Blood... and the demonologist's life reaches another turning point.

As iron hands reach out to tear him apart, Jason Blood utters a "desperate visceral cry" of "Etrigan! Etrigan!"—knowingly calling upon the demon for the first time. Where Merlin's arrested powers had failed, the plea from the demon's mortal self inexplicably succeeds. Popping into existence like an occult Seventh Cavalry, Etrigan proceeds to trash the place as only he can, indirectly bringing about the deaths of Meg and her "mannikin" in the process. At Merlin's direction, he wrenches open the entrance to a hidden chamber, revealing a creature so ghastly that even Etrigan is appalled. This, the wizard reveals, is the Somnambula, a being that magnifies thought into reality, and the source of the "strange force" that had brought Merlin back to the world of men. Through its presence, Meg had elevated her power to staggering proportions; and through that presence, Jason Blood had managed to summon Etrigan to save his life. The Somnambula is sent back to its own dimension, and the demon and his master exit together for the first time in centuries.

Without pausing for breath, issue 6 began with them still together in Transylvania, where Blood, preparing to return to the States, notes the fear that seizes a group of villagers when an eerie sound they attribute to "the Howler" splits the night. Riding into the woods to bid his master farewell, he is confronted by the shaggy horror itself, "a primeval thing of unmatched ferocity." Having learned the value of keeping a demon on call, Blood—who's evidently been tutored by Merlin during the interim between issues—wastes no time in chanting Etrigan into existence. To his surprise, he finds that the creature's strength is equal to his own; only by use of demon's-flame can he send the Howler scurrying. Merlin, who has observed, identifies the monster as a victim of the "primal entity," an evil parasitic force from which the carrier can escape only by passing its influence onto someone else. The pathetic beast is soon forgotten as master and demon say their goodbyes, Merlin vanishing in a flash of light, leaving his servant to seek more mundane means of travel.

On a Gotham-bound airliner, an unprepossing man takes the seat next to Blood and casually identifies himself as the daytime persona of the Howler. Having learned Jason's identity, he has tracked him across Europe to beg the demonologist's aid in releasing him from his curse. Blood is touched by the stranger's plight, so similar to his own, and promises that the man shall find his release. Back in his apartment, Blood begins the elaborate ritual of exorcism, only to be interrupted by the entrance of a

frantic Glenda. Considering that Jason was last seen being carried away by a dragon, her state of mind at discovering him safe at home is perfectly justifiable. Her timing leaves a bit to be desired, though, for her sudden appearance at this crucial moment delays the proceedings just enough for the Howler to take possession of its host again. Hastily locking Glenda in another room, Blood summons Etrigan—and the fight that follows is both brief and brutal, coming to an abrupt conclusion as Etrigan forces the tortured creature through the penthouse window and down to its doom on the street. Blood's promise has been kept; the tragic stranger has found his release. The tale evidently over, we are asked to linger a moment to watch a dazed bystander staggering away—a man who came too close to the Howler before its death could fully eradicate the parasitic "primal entity"—and that night, the streets of Gotham echo with a distant, chilling sound. . .

This variation on the traditional werewolf story was as thoroughly satisfying as anything that had come before. The unprecedented emphasis on human interest, especially in relation to Jason Blood, resulted in the strongest script yet. The art, too, was at its peak, combining the usual Kirby dynamism with a masterful delineation of character. *The Demon* had never been better.

For the rest of its run, it would never be as good again.

The Plunge

Perhaps Kirby simply lost interest. Perhaps his disappointment over the unexpected cancellation of his "Fourth World" cornerstone, *The New Gods* (at around the same time *Demon* #1 had appeared), was finally coming through in his work. Whatever the cause, the standards that had been set for plot, mood, characterization—even the very urgency that had propelled those elements along—went into a rapid and permanent decline. The fire had gone out of his demon from Hell.

Issue #7, "Witchboy," introduced Klarion, a young practitioner of the black arts from another dimension. Ostensibly seeking refuge from evil spirits, he is actually a fugitive from the justice of his elders, whom he had sought to dominate through sorcery. Evidently under Klarion's spell, Etrigan gives the pursuing Elders the bum's rush by "dissolving their stability in the mortal world," returning them to their own plane. To Klarion's surprise, he too, is banished; having sought to control Merlin's demon, he hadn't realized that part of the magician's power is Etrigan's to command, as well. (For

IN THE FURIOUS STRUGGLE TO FREE HERSELF, GLENDA TEARS OFF THE PHANTOM'S MASK!

OHHH--!!
Y-YOUR FACE--!
---I-IT'S---



NEXT ISSUE ON SALE ON OR ABOUT MAR. 27!

HORRIBLE?
IS THAT THE WORD YOU'RE
FISHING FOR, GALATEA?
HAHAHAHAHA!!



The face of the phantom—from the beginning of *THE DEMON*'s plunge.

that matter, neither had we. Not that it mattered; the subject never came up again.) There were a few good moments in this story, but not enough to salvage the sketchy, abrupt nature of the script. Klarion's whimsical personality was an attempt on Kirby's part to show the evil than can lurk behind a smiling face. In execution, though, it was just silly.

Issues 8-10 featured "The Phantom of the Sewers," one Farley Fairfax by name, a crazed matinee idol of yesteryear whose trilling with the emotions of a vengeful witch had left him a reasonable facsimile of Lon Chaney's Phantom of the Opera. As comic book fate would have it, Glenda is a dead-ringer for the long-dead witch, and the mad Fairfax fixes upon the notion that she can restore his once-handsome features. Sure enough, he drags her to his stinking lair, and the resulting manhunt through the catacombs, obligatory unmasking scene, resurrection of the witch's spirit, and a climactic explosion that must have backed up half the toilets in Gotham, just barely managed to keep the pot boiling until the tale creaked to a close. No amount of action, though could hide the fact that it had taken Etrigan three issues to handle the "threat" of one crazy old man.

Bad as this story is, it contained a subplot which could have at least partly redeemed it. Readers had con-

sistently written in to request more depth in the handling of *The Demon*'s human half; one perceptive fan commented, "I feel there is something essentially tragic and doomed about Jason Blood (a semi-conscious entity rushing down the centuries with too little time)." Issue #8 complied, with a tragic Jason who could stand the pressure of his dual nature no longer. Introducing the recurring element of the fabled Philosopher's Stone to the series—evidently unrelated to the one wielded by Flash-foe Dr. Alchemy, this all-powerful artifact seems to have been lying around in Jason's desk like a spare paperweight—he calls forth "the ultimate cold" and literally freezes Hell out of himself. His celebration turns to agony when Glenda is kidnapped by Fairfax, with no handy *Demon* around to save her. This could have been an interesting development, but its dramatic potential was curtailed by Etrigan's prompt return to the following issue as Blood uses the Stone to bathe himself in Hellfire, setting Etrigan free and adding yet another disappointment to an already wretched story.

The Pits

This failed attempt was pretty much the last hurrah for any characterization in the series. Harry, who had begun



as a slightly tenuous everyman forced to cope with forces beyond his reasoning, rapidly declined into out-and-out unfunny "comic relief." Randu and Glenda were simply frozen into a pair of ciphers, alternately heroic or tragic depending upon the needs of the storyline, never seeming to have anything to do with themselves other than hang out at Jason's place. (Since the earliest days of the series, his three friends had wandered unannounced into Blood's apartment whenever the mood struck them, hanging around like unemployed in-laws no matter what horrors were visited upon them there. God knows what their home lives must have been like.) When the stories were exciting, it was possible to excuse such shorthand on Kirby's part; but when the series began to bog down, this became increasingly grating. Blood suffered the most, though, finally a man with no personality whatsoever, and no life away from the unconsciously symbolic wrestling man.

The series continued its downhill course with another three-parter, more padded and even more blatantly derived from old horror movies than the last. Concerning mad doctor Baron von Evilstein, whom his fellow scientists called "von Evilstein" (sure they did), this one combined a tormented homunculus ala the Frankenstein monster with H.G. Wells' "beasts-into-men" motif, throwing in an Ygor lookalike cleverly named Ygor, and wrapping up the whole mess by having Etrigan transform Evilstein and Ygor into vultures with the Philosopher's Stone. Worst of all is the manner in which The Demon is brought into the story, discovering trouble afoot while evidently out on patrol—just like any run-of-the-mill superhero.

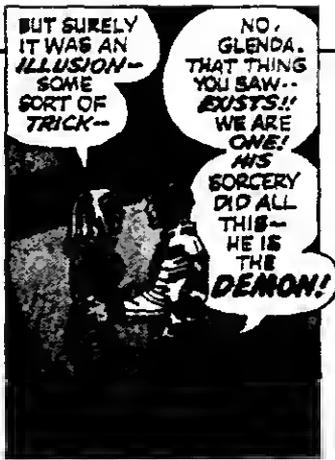
This undemonlike behavior may have rubbed off during the character's first team-up outing, inevitably considering their mutual stomping grounds—with Batman, in *The Brave and the Bold* #109, centering around a creature bent on killing every sailor in Gotham out of revenge for a death sentence passed on its mortal form 90 years before. Jim Aparo's art was good, but unusually muddy in reproduction. Far worse was Bob Haney's script, which, though fairly consistent in terms of story, betrayed a total misunderstanding of Kirby's characters. Etrigan spouted warmed-over Thor dialogue ("Aye, Randu, and thither fly we to rescue Batman..."). For the sake of "drama," Merlin was dragged in to behave like Odin at his most childish, removing Etrigan's "demon power" (as opposed, one must presume, to Batman's human power) simply because his busy servant had missed an appointment, putting him at the mercy of the killer creature, only to restore it four panels later. As mediocre as the solo stories had become, this was infinitely worse.

TOP: A vintage Kirby spread, featuring Baron Von Evilstein and his henchman Ygor (l). BELOW: The Demon battles his "evil twin."



Things picked up considerably in Kirby's next two-parter, even though it featured the return of Klarion the Witchboy. The character was sillier than ever, but this time the story was solid, doing away with damsels in distress, menaces to society, and all the other superheroic trappings that had nearly ruined the series by forcing uncharacteristic altruism upon an amoral demon (who may have been tightening the good fight due to the influences of Merlin, but simply had no business mixing it with kidnapers and mad scientists). Bent on revenge, Klarion is systematically eliminating all traces of The Demon's human self, causing Etrigan to become increasingly incorporeal. This interdependence between demon and demonologist raised an interesting question: since Jason Blood was created solely as a disguise for Etrigan in the world of mortals, do both cease to be when there are no mortals around to acknowledge their existence? So it would seem, for as both Harry and Randy lapse into comas, he becomes an intangible phantom powerless to do more than watch as Klarion creates a ruthless doppelganger to take Blood's place. He is finally returned to three-dimensional form when Glenda, sure that the creature she has mistaken for Jason has lost his mind, accidentally triggers the power of the Stone while wishing for his return to normal. The doppelganger is transformed into a mock-Etrigan, but proves no match for the genuine article, who sends both Klarion and his slave back to the "beyond region"—an unfortunately rushed ending to the best storyline in many issues.

The quality stayed up for the next adventure, which brought Morgaine LeFey and Warly, with the hosts of Satan in tow, back into The Demon's life. Their goal this time was to seize the Philosopher's Stone; failing that, they and their hell-spawned gang capture and enslave Merlin's demon. Learning that the Stone is still in Glenda's possession, Warly entices her to LeFey's lair with promises of bringing her to Jason. That promise is kept as Morgaine chants Etrigan back into Blood before Glenda's horrified eyes. Warly snatches the Stone, but—overcome by his own thirst for power—turns its occult might upon the sorceress, transforming her into a lifeless dummy. Warly finds that holding the Stone is not the same as controlling it, though, and the place becomes a blazing nightmare through which the assembled fiends rage out of control. Blood, released from the witch's grasp, evokes a counter-pell to eradicate his fellow demons, and he and Glenda make their escape. Ahead of them lies the painful sorting-out of this new development in their life together.



The series had at last produced another issue to equal the first half-dozen, combining motivated action and slambang pacing with the first real character development since the title's earliest days. Kirby had found his second wind, but it had taken him too long; with this issue, *The Demon* was cancelled.

Odd Jobs

It was three years before Etrigan showed his face in public again, in another Bob Haney *Brave and Bold* team-up, actually inferior to the first. An ancient Chinese wizard called the Shahn-zi returned for a rematch with Batman (who'd previously defeated him with an assist from The Spectre). Jason and Glenda, having sorted things out so far as to having become engaged during the intervening years, happen upon the situation while playing tourist in Gotham's Chinatown. Jason offers Batman his aid, to Glenda's consternation (but then, she should've known that betrothal to a demon from Hell would have its drawbacks). The Shahn-zi's goal is world domination, of course, and to keep the mismatched heroes out of his hair he turns Etrigan into a fly, Batman into a vampire bat, and finally himself

into a cobra. (Don't ask.) Author Haney calls Merlin in from left field again to stingily grant Etrigan shape-shifting ability on a one-time basis. Becoming a mongoose, The Demon brings the threat of the Shahn-zi to an end, allowing all involved to return to human form—except the story, which stayed a turkey from beginning to end.

Etrigan emerged a year later with a golden prize—fan favorite artist Michael Golden, who with scripter Bob Rozakis gave *The Demon* an unexpected second chance with a guest-shot in *Batman Family's* "Man-Bat" strip. This time, everything clicked, with Golden's scratchy style lending mystery and power to one of the most satisfying *Demon* scripts since Kirby's initial issues.

A "freak storm of inter-dimensional energy" combined with impulses generated by the Justice League's Earth-Two transporter return Lefey to her own form. Swearing vengeance upon Jason Blood, she transports herself to his apartment and seizes the Philosopher's Stone, finally achieving the heightening of power she had sought since her first appearance. A few hours later, Blood comes home and is summoned by phone to New York... where, in a hospital waiting room, expectant father Kirk Langstrom is pacing anxiously when shrieks ring through the maternity section.

Flapping onto the scene as Man-Bat, Kirk is attacked in a delivery room by a small green monster which to his stupefaction abruptly reverts to its true form, a newborn baby. At this point, Blood enters to reveal that this is but one in a series of "demon-births," which he has been summoned by hospital administrators to investigate. He has his chance shortly thereafter when another infant horror appears, which The Demon holds at bay with his hellfire until it, too, becomes human. Man-Bat enters, but before a Marvel-style misunderstanding can take

place, Etrigan sets matters straight by literally burning knowledge into Langstrom's brain: "I sense the coming birth of a child with latent powers so great that Morgaine dare not miss tapping them. With each birth, the witch infuses her own spell, hoping that the child will be the correct one..."

The birth of his own child imminent, a horrified Man-Bat volunteers to assist, and within moments the humanoid bat and living gargoyle are soaring over the streets of New York—an awe-inspiring sight, if not a pretty one. Homing in on the witch's location through Langstrom's sensory powers, they crash into her hideout—only to find her newly-amplified powers too great for them, and they are imprisoned within suffocatingly tight mystic bonds. Returning to his human state, Langstrom gains enough slack to wriggle free and seize the Stone. Before Lefey can strike, he turns its power upon her, willing her into a statue, from which form she has yet to escape. The hideous heroes have triumphed, and Langstrom's newborn daughter is safe from the witch's spell.

Three issues later, a *Demon* series was announced in the pages of *Batman Family*, which promptly folded before the series could appear. Luckily, a few of its features were absorbed into *Detective Comics*, and *The Demon* was one of those. For the first time in five years, Etrigan had a home of his own, in the company's flagship title.

Things began auspiciously. "The Eternity Book," written by the talented Len Wein and illustrated by Golden and Dick Giordano, opened with the murder of a Gotham bookseller, who expires with a whispered "Yarva Etrigan daemonicus..." We cut to Blood's apartment, where the familiar cast is gathered and looking none the worse for the passage of time (with the exception of Randu, who in a strange and unexplained touch by Wein has been recently blinded, yet thanks to his psychic powers is still a worthy partner for Blood on the wrestling mat). In the midst of their sweaty fun, thunder rumbles, the lights go out... and in answer to the bookseller's invocation, Etrigan appears for the first time in many months, to Glenda's dismay and everyone's surprise. With a rhyming "Thunder calls me from the sky To save the Book which dare not die," he disappears into the storm-ravaged night. Randu correctly surmises that the "Book" is the same repository of Merlin's lore that has complicated their lives before—and Etrigan finds himself in a deadly struggle with Baron Tyme, a strange half-corporeal, half-nebulous figure whose possession of the Eternity Book places Etrigan in his power.

Promising as this first installment

Michael Golden's stunning interpretation of the Demon from his *BATMAN FAMILY* series.





AS I LED YOU
ACROSS THE
COURTYARD, I
SECRETLY WALKED
THE PATTERN
OF POWER!

ETERNITY BOOK OR NO, I AM YOUR
EQUAL NOW—AND I SHALL DESTROY
YOU!

When the Demon series was turned over to the wildly individual Steve Ditko, he turned out to be the perfect artist for the character, bringing with him the hallucinatory dimension-hopping of DR. STRANGE and the springloaded action of SPIDER-MAN.

was, succeeding episodes looked to be even better—for at this point, Golden and Giordano turned pencil and brush over to the wildly individual Steve Ditko. Then and still the definitive artist on Spider-Man and Dr. Strange, Ditko's legendary status nearly rivaled Kirby's own, and it was quite conceivable that his quirky rendering of spring-loaded heroes and hallucinatory magic would be even more appropriate for this occult actions series than the bludgeoning style of its creator. If half the old magic could be invoked, The Demon was surely back for good.

For the next three episodes, Wein and Ditko tracked the furious progress of Tyme's quest to restore his body, grotesquely trapped midway between dimensions by a spell only Merlin's power could reverse. At last recapturing the ancient volume and forcing the bookseller's brother to become its new keeper—an evidently hereditary task the full story of which is yet to be related—Etrigan returns home as Blood, where he finds his friends prisoners of the tenacious Tyme. As they hang helplessly in mid-air, contemplating a fate worse than going home, the desperate Baron outlines his new scheme:

"While The Demon exists," he explains, "the Jason Blood half of you is trapped in limbo." By tapping the power which allows Etrigan to switch from man to demon, Tyme theorizes that he can make himself whole again. This disruption of dimensional balances could prove fatal to Blood, but with his friends' lives at stake, he cannot resist. As Tyme grows ever more solid, the demonologist becomes an increasingly distorted hybrid of man and demon. At the last moment, Randu summons enough psychic power to interrupt the process, giving Blood/Etrigan a chance

to make a break for the shadows. Tyme, too near his goal to give up now, hurls his spell at the demon's dark shape—and finds himself losing solidity instead of regaining it. He vanishes utterly into the "dark dimension," having mistaken Etrigan's image in a mirror for the real thing, thus reflecting his own spell back at him.

In an epilogue, the bookseller's brother, wanting nothing to do with a relic that brings death and demons to its keeper, throws the Eternity Book into the garbage. A curious janitor, greed aroused by its gold binding, decides to give it a read before disposing of it... and on that ambiguous note, the run in *Detective* ended, after a scant four episodes.

The merits of the creative staff notwithstanding, the series had simply failed to strike any sparks, neither approximating the spirit of the original nor establishing a new style of its own. Perhaps due to the limited space granted a backup slot, Wein's writing seemed rushed, giving some admittedly fascinating ideas short shrift in favor of simplistic heroics and hoary plot contrivances (such as a magic spell reflected by a mirror, as though it were powered by two D batteries). The art, too, was a disappointment, with Ditko turning in a surprisingly lackluster job from beginning to end. Hopes that the Dr. Strange artist's special touch would at last lead *The Demon* to realize his potential vanished like the Vapors of Valtorr, and our hero from Hell was out in the cold again.

Jason Blood's next outing was not to be for another two years, when Gerry Conway, with art team Jose Delbo and Dave Hunt, brought him into the plot of an ongoing Wonder Woman serial, involving ominous doings at a think-tank called the

Delphi Foundation. Longtime series regular-cum-embarrassment Etta Candy is abducted by Baal-Satyr, a demon with the rollercoaster title "high lordling of the lower depths." Acting on the suggestions of her mystic advisor, the old voodoo queen Mother Juju, Wonder Woman goes to the apartment of Jason Blood. There she finds the regulars, minus Harry, assembled around the familiar wrestling mat, and in no mood to admit the truth about Jason's dual nature to this stranger in star-spangled panties. With no time to waste on dissembling, the heroine calls out the transformation chant, also provided by Juju, setting Etrigan free once more. Out of gratitude for his release, he summons a portal to "a place beyond mortal ken"—and they vanish.

As presented by Delbo and Hunt, the Netherworld is a Ditkoesque nightmare in which strange objects float through inky space. Demon and Amazon enter Baal-Satyr's floating fortress through the waste disposal chute (allowing Conway to insert several unfunny stench gags). The confrontation that follows is pretty standard superhero stuff, with Baal-Satyr ending up melted, Witch-of-the-West-like, by an unexpected bath. Leaving Wonder Woman to return Etta safely home, her memory mercifully wiped clean of the incident, Etrigan reappears at the apartment, where Glenda must recite the spell herself in order to trade the freedom-intoxicated demon for her fiancée.

Wonder Woman returns to the Delphi Foundation for the showdown, little suspecting that Blood, stupidly bringing Glenda along, has preceded her. She bursts into the director's office to discover the source of all the trouble, Klarion the Witch-boy (here characterized with

far greater maturity than in the Kirby stories), watching as a mesmerized Etrigan gleefully chokes Glenda to death.

Klarion orders The Demon to kill the Amazon but as he whirls to do so, he stops, and—recognizing Wonder Woman as his friend—instead he launches a murderous attack upon the witch-boy, who escapes with his life only through the heroine's intervention. Facing a trembling Glenda, Etrigan voluntarily chants the transformation spell, and for the first time since his series began, Jason Blood opens his heart: "I've come back to you, Glenda . . . your love brought me back"—to which Wonder Woman offers the silent prayer, "Aphrodite, may you always smile on them as you have this day."

Occasional lapses in geography notwithstanding, Conway remains one of the best writers in mainstream comics, and the texture worked into this team-up tale is far more complex than can be suggested here. That a union of Wonder Woman and Etrigan could work at all is worthy of note, and here it worked much better than might have been expected, their highly disparate natures deftly exploited by the author to provide some memorable moments. Perhaps the most striking is Etrigan's mocking refusal of Steve Trevor's hand in friendship, as the laughing Demon fades from the scene until only his grin remains, hanging in the empty air.

Ultimately, though, the story as a whole just didn't work. Conway's thesis of "love conquers all" was not only totally out of character, but was entirely too pat, many of its elements no more than retread scenes from earlier stories. Worse, the big twist at the end made no real sense: if Etrigan could resist Klarion's order to kill his friend Wonder Woman, what was he doing strangling the woman he loves? It was one thing for Marvel's Son of Satan to end up happily ever after with romance-comic heroine Patsy Walker; the sheer perversity of that situation made it work. Conway's version of hellspawn-loves-human was pure treacle, and if that had been the last Etrigan story to see print, his career would have ended with a great sense of waste.

The Demon Redeemed

For three years, Hell kept a low profile. A few of its lesser denizens poked their leathery scalps into the odd story, but the only demon who'd ever shot for the big time was nowhere to be found. Some of the biggest names in comics had tried to keep his star aloft, but it had become all too apparent that the Kirby touch



A rare Joe Kubert rendition of The Demon, from DC COMICS PRESENTS.

was as indelible as the mark of Cain, defying all the attempts of all comers to put their own stamp upon his material. In the dozen years that had passed since The Demon's debut, he'd spent almost eighty percent of that time out of the public eye, with only four guest appearances and two failed series to his credit. Statistically, Etrigan was all washed up.

So Len Wein, author of The Demon's ill-fated series in *Detective*, had nowhere to go but up when he chose to bring Jason Blood into the pages of the Superman team-up book *DC Comics Presents*. Whereas most such get-togethers of super-folk are brought about through shaky coincidence, "The Resurgence of Blackkir Thorn" managed the trick with grace, opening with a media event at Gotham's Riverside Museum. On the job for Galaxy Communications were reporters Clark Kent and Lana Lang, whose archaeologist father Lewis had organized the evening in order to unveil his newest discovery: the petrified likeness of an ancient Druidic priest discovered in Scotland and reckoned to be 2000 years old. No stretch of the imagination was required to understand why Jason Blood, noted student of occult

antiquities, was (with Glenda) among the invited guests; and with the stage plausibly set, the story proper began at once.

Moonlight falls upon the wooden figure for the first time in millennia, reviving the Druid's long-dormant essence and animating the effigy in which it had slept. Just to let everyone know who they're dealing with, the ancient mage promptly begins to scatter the guests around with elemental forces at his command. Most of the guests, that is; evading the magical gale, Clark Kent, as he has a wont to do in times of stress, hides in a corner and takes off his clothes.

Blood has slipped away too, abetted by Glenda (who, perhaps due to Jason's profession of love in the Wonder Woman story, has finally stopped whining about her fiancée's career); returning as Etrigan, he discovers the man of steel powerless against the Druid's magic. With a neat couplet—"Before you're fit to learn my name—You'll know the heat of demon-flame"—punctuated by a fiery burst, he routs the wooden wizard, who disappears into the night.

Thorn soon makes his presence



The Demon returns to his former glory in *SWAMP THING*, by Moore, Bissette, and Tottleben.

known again, by way of a massive canopy of greenery that springs up to cover all of Gotham Park—a trap set for Superman, whose body the Druid covets as permanent host. It looks as though the plan will succeed until Etrigan again comes to the Kixptonians' rescue. Superman wraps it all up by flving Thorn into space, where—his life-giving link to the earth cut off—the Druid becomes "one with the elementals," vanishing without a trace.

In terms of plot and characterization, Wein's story was about as complex as a Golden Age backup strip—and that's why it worked so beautifully. Where other writers had struggled unsuccessfully to make use of the relentlessly Kirbysque trappings that had clung to Etrigan since his debut, Wein simply ignored

them. (It was surely no coincidence that the only other viable attempt to revive the character, Bob Rozakis' Man-Bat team-up, had taken the same approach.) Harry and Randu, the wrestling room, Merlin, the Philosopher's Stone—all were ignored, and the result was a streamlined adventure that zipped by at a clip unknown since The Demon's earliest days, made all the more fluid by the impressionistic art of industry legend Joe Kubert, who turned in a first-rate job from highly imaginative layouts to simple but powerful rendering.

A particularly striking touch was Etrigan's rhyming dialogue, a device Wein had flirted with briefly in Detective, and for which Kirby himself had set the precedent back in *Demon* #3. Here, though, it was

employed consistently for the first time, and the resulting richness of character was a revelation: with one ingenious stroke, Wein had defined a character who had for years defied definition, forever ending comparisons with the Hulk or anyone else. With "The Resurgence of Blackfrair Thorn," Etrigan had come into his own.

Wein's watershed contribution to the Demon mythos was rather unfortunately overshadowed just a few months later when Jason Blood stepped off a bus in humid Baton Rouge, and into the most nightmarish exploit of his career. From his first appearance, marked by uncharacteristic displays of precognition and almost reeking of evil, it was obvious that something sinister had happened to the formerly stoic and staid young demonologist. That sinister something was British writer Alan Moore. An acknowledged master of characterization and atmosphere, Moore's ability to transform the often leaden elements of a character's past into gold, in effect creating entirely new directions for established series through the ingenious tying up of loose ends, had already breathed new life into *Marvelman* and *Swamp Thing*. Now, at the suggestion of *Swamp Thing* art team John Tottleben and Stephen Bissette, Kirby fans both, he was working his magic on Etrigan, and for once both aspects of The Demon's nature would receive the full treatment.

It is Blood, in fact, who dominates more than half of the three-part tale, inexplicably depicted as a diabolical, mocking presence haunting the streets of the Louisiana capital in search of information about a recently-deceased young couple. Their son Paul, having retreated into a fantasy dominated by the figure of an imagined "monkey king," is now a patient at the Elysium Lawns Center for Autistic Children, where series regular Abby Arcane Cable is employed. Blood seeks Abby out, revealing his unexplained knowledge that she is one of the damned Arcanes, hoping her history will allow her to accept the danger which he warns awaits at Elysium Lawns.

At the Center, the children are running amok in a frenzy of fear created by Paul's "monkey king"—not a fantasy at all, but rather the obscure Kamara created by Kirby back in *Demon* #4. Summoned back to the corporeal world by Paul's parents (under the influence, it is later revealed, of Abby's evil uncle), killing them in the process, the creature has lurked into the back of Paul's consciousness ever since, drinking deeply from the fear all the young residents of Elysium Lawns have in such ready supply. In a superbly-executed sequence, the creative team

intercuts from a mood of impending dread as Abby and the Swamp Thing race to the Center, to absolute terror as we see the influence of the Kamara at work upon its helpless victims. A child who'd accidentally smothered her baby brother is paralyzed by the vision of a blue-tinted infant crawling across her bed. A victim of incestuous rape beholds the distorted vision of her father, rasping, "Mo-mee needunt kno-o-ow . . ." In each room, mortal terror is summoned and greedily consumed until the Kamara, intoxicated by this orgy of fear, goes completely mad.

On the roof a hunched figure appears and calls out: "Feast, Jack-anape! Eat heartily while you can. . . Upon your neck's the breath of Etrigan!" And, crashing through a skylight in what is undoubtedly the single most dramatic image of his career, The Demon rips into the story to do battle with tear itself. Cackling mad, he momentarily routs the Kamara and turns to kill young Paul—whose "small but necessary" death will eliminate the Kamara's link to this world. The Swamp Thing barely manages to rescue the boy—a fortunate intervention, for it is ultimately Paul who defeats the Kamara by overcoming his own fear, shrinking the creature to the size of an insect, whereupon Etrigan drops the tiny creature down his gullet with a lip-smacking "Fear, no matter how small it has grown, retains a certain flavor of its own. . ." Abby pursues the fleeing demon and finds a shaken Jason Blood, still "indisposed" by the transformation. In the final moments of the story, he reveals the secret behind the change that has been wrought in him: "(Etrigan and I) struck a bargain. . . We would grow more like each other. . . (But) demons cheat. It is their nature. Oh, yes, I have grown more like Etrigan. And he too has grown more like Etrigan. He has merely borrowed a

little of my intellect, my vocabulary. He has not changed. We are still at war. . . and I fear that I am losing." With this simple but chilling exposition, brilliantly incorporating a logical explanation of the rhyming dialogue, Jason Blood is at last brought in focus as the haunted human being we knew he should have been all along. . . and as he exits into the darkness to which he now truly belongs, a final blurb tells us that "This issue is dedicated with awe and affection to Jack Kirby."

In the remarkable *Saga of the Swamp Thing Annual #2*, Etrigan acts as the Swamp Thing's guide through Hell, leading him on a quest to regain Abby's unjustly-condemned soul through as chilling a rendition of Hades as any literary form has ever offered. Just as their previous encounter firmly established the definitive Jason Blood, here we are presented with the essence of Etrigan through the device of a tour through his true home, shown here for the first time since his adventures began. Despite the story's obvious parallels with "The Divine Comedy," this Hell is a far cry from the logically-ordered place of punishment envisioned by Dante. It is, rather, the hideous, mindless chaos revealed at the final curtain of Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*, a realm of madness populated by souls in eternal torment and fellow-demons who mock Etrigan for having become a "rhyming demon," for fancying himself "half-a-man." As the deceptively simple action reveals, even in Hell Etrigan knows no rules. He does indeed hold himself above his odious kin, whom he tends off while the Swamp Thing makes off with Abby, casually beheading her abominable uncle while opening a passage for their escape. Our final view of him is his horned silhouette peering from the mouth of Hades, the echoes of his demonic mirth filling our ears: Etrigan at home—at war with—Hell itself.

An off-the-wall guest appearance in the humorous *Blue Devil* shortly thereafter, though played strictly for laughs, served to thoroughly validate the correctness of Moore's (and Wein's) new interpretation by accepting it without question as a subject for satire. Here authors Gary Cohn and Dan Mishkin had no end of fun parodying The Demon's fierce energy as he bounds the lengths of the country in search of a "Hell-born entity" that has possessed the Blue Devil's trident, trading lines of metrefacturing rhyme with other characters, and ultimately arriving too late to do anything more than observe: "This rod contains no magic power of any kind! Ah, very well—in that case. . . never mind!"

With a blush and a shrug he bounds away. Even a demon can have an off-day.

Within a few months, he was back in the *Blue Devil Annual*, spouting more rotten poetry (including a hellish limerick), and, as in his first *Swamp Thing* adventure, gobbling up tiny demons right and left. One of the story's highpoints was a single panel in which Etrigan, mouth crammed full of the little devils, proclaims "Mumble flubble. Murgling glub Brllig wuggle Drobble blub!"

There was a time, and not so long ago, when such treatment would've amounted to poking fun at the halt and lame—but now even the most diehard Demon fans can join in the laughter, for at long last their horned hero has been firmly established as one of the most intriguing figures in the DC pantheon. There is no longer any reason to wonder whether each appearance will be his last, as evidenced by the upcoming mini-series by fan favorite Matt Wagner, as well as a return engagement in *Swamp Thing*. Even more adventures will undoubtedly follow.

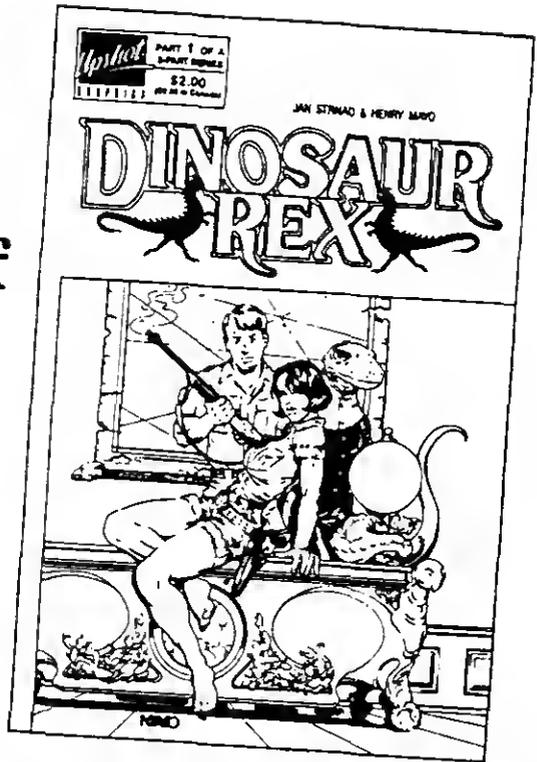
Whether or not future creative teams will be able to maintain the high standard that has at last been set for the character remains to be seen. (Examine the talented Marv Wolfman's lack of finesse with rhyming dialogue in Etrigan's brief appearance in *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, redeemed only by the gorgeous Perez Ordway art). The Alan Moore rendition may seem an impossible act to follow. . . but so, for seven years, was Jack Kirby's. Indeed, what Moore has wrought would not have been possible without the efforts of all the contributors who have come before. Even the least effective performed the service of keeping The Demon before the public; the best have added to a legend that with proper care can only grow more compelling.

And "The One Who Waits"—Etrigan, who has waited so long for his time to come—for him, the wait is over.

The Phantom Stranger, Swamp Thing, and vs. Irv. from SWAMP THING ANNUAL #2.



Why are we giving away free copies of DINO SAUR REX?



by Jan Strnad

Good comic books have a habit of dying young. The classic example is *Zot!*, an engaging, action-filled title that won the Jack Kirby Award for "Best Comic" in 1984. *Zot!* lasted ten issues before low sales forced its cancellation.

Nevertheless, small publishers like Fantagraphics Books keep publishing good, unusual comic books that most fans will never see. In fact, Fantagraphics Books has established an entire line—UPSHOT GRAPHICS—devoted to limited series, full color, action/adventure comic books for the discriminating reader. Here's what a few paranormally aware fans will read and enjoy from Upshot in 1986.

Flesh & Bones by myself and Dennis Fujitake is a four-part science fiction series starring DALGODA, hero of the comic book series that bore his name. Don Thompson, writing in the *Comics Buyer's Guide*, called *Dalgoda* "terrific" and "skillful," and R. A. Jones of *Amazing Heroes* put it on his Top Ten list for 1985.

Flesh & Bones recaps Dal's previous adventures very briefly (for the benefit of newcomers) and then launches into a fast-paced story of rebellion, betrayal, heroism, alien encounters and celestial visions.

But wait, there's Moore. Alan Moore, that is, and the incurable Steve Parkhouse, two crazy Brits whose creative marriage has spawned some of the most bizarre panelology ever to see print in America. In this case it's the incomparable "BoJeffries Saga" starring the intrepid Trevor Inchmale. Is a humble rent collector any match for someone who can "turn a cream egg into a diamond and then eat it anyway"? "The BoJeffries Saga" will run as a four-part feature in the back pages of *Flesh & Bones*.

The Miracle Squad is another four-part series, this time by writer John Wooley and artist Terry Tidwell. Wooley has been selling comic book scripts since 1969 and is currently an entertainment writer for *Tulsa World*. Tidwell's art has appeared in several newspapers and periodicals and he recently finished pencilling a story for Marvel's *Savage Sword of Conan*.

The Miracle Squad is set in Hollywood in the 1930s where a "poverty row" movie studio—Miracle Studios—faces takeover by a powerful crime boss. After Miracle's owner is machine-gunned in broad daylight, a closeknit group of studio employees hits the vengeance trail as the self-styled *Miracle Squad!*





Blood of the Beast is a horror/science fiction tale that DC offered their top rates to buy, but the writer (me) said "no—this one's too good to sign away in a work-for-hire contract." Steve Parkhouse is turning in what he calls "the best drawing (he's) ever done" for *Blood of the Beast*, gritty, realistic work that goes straight through the eyeballs to impact the back of the brain... kind of like being hit in the head with a two-by-four.

Blood of the Beast is about wolves and wolf-people, the remnants of an alien expedition, and the survival of one tiny fragment of civilization in a wilderness of savagery and terror.

Blood of the Beast is a limited series of four books. Frankly, I don't think the human nervous system could take any more.

Dinosaur Rex is about dinosaur hunting in the 1920s. In this fantasy world created by myself and Henry Mayo, brawny men and buxom women chop their way through the jungly tendrils in pursuit of the biggest game on earth: the living dinosaurs that still dominate the globe.

"Mayo" is not a household word outside the area of sandwich dressings, but it soon will be: Henry is an outstanding artist. He's worked extensively with Hollywood special effects experts on projects like *Creature*, *The Terminator*, and *Dune*, and was recently recruited by the largest advertising agency in the world to create a comics-style poster for the Dr Pepper Company.

Like I said, the boy's good.
And so is *Dinosaur Rex*.

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To get your free three-issue subscription to *Dinosaur Rex* you first have to subscribe to the other three titles, *Flesh & Bones*, *The Miracle Squad*, and *Blood of the Beast*.

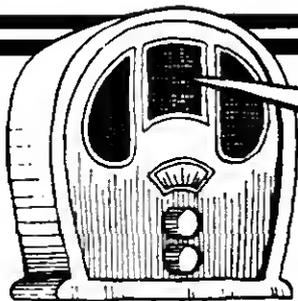
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from **Renegade Press**

BY BARRY DUTTER



Photo by MIKE CATRON

STEVE ENGLEHART

In the mid-70s, Steve Englehart gained a reputation as one of the best writers at Marvel. His versions of Captain America and Dr. Strange are considered among the definitive incarnations of the characters. In his nearly 50-issue stint on the Avengers, Englehart accomplished such feats as marrying the Vision and the Scarlet Witch, and bringing about the legendary Avengers/Defenders clash. He also wrote such titles as Captain Marvel, Luke Cage, Hero For Hire, The Hulk, The Defenders, and Master of Kung Fu (which he co-created with Jim Starlin).

At the peak of his popularity, Englehart left Marvel due to dissatisfaction with company policy. He still had some more comic book stories to tell, though, so Englehart went over to DC, where he won equal acclaim for his brief stints on Justice League of America and Batman. (His Batman work, done in collaboration with Walt Simonson and Marshall Rogers, has recently been reprinted.) After a short stay at DC, Englehart left the comics field altogether, to go off and write a novel, *The Point Man* (1981).

Englehart gradually re-entered the field with Coyote, a character he created, in a story serialized in *Eclipse Magazine*. (The Coyote was later released as a graphic novel, *I Am Coyote*.) Coyote went on to become one of the first series in Marvel's Epic line of creator-owned titles.

Englehart has now returned to comics in full force, writing for both of the companies he once left behind. Currently Englehart scripts two monthly series—Green Lantern Corps and West Coast Avengers—and is picking up Daredevil. He is also doing a limited series—*Vision and the Scarlet Witch*, with another (the Silver Surfer) on the way. Clearly the ill-feelings Englehart once held for Marvel no longer exist, and he is now back doing what he does best.

At one time, Englehart's name alone was enough to get people to buy a comic—a status similar to the one shared by Alan Moore today. But with the rapid turn-over of comics readers, many of today's fans may not know who Steve Englehart is. Englehart is doing his best to change this situation, as he makes a bid to regain

his former glory.

This interview was conducted by Barry Dutter in December, 1983. It was transcribed by Dutter, copy-edited by Englehart, and edited by:

—David Smay

AMAZING HEROES: Since you were away from Marvel for so long, how did it feel to return to the Marvel characters?

STEVE ENGLEHART: It felt very good, actually. When I got out of comics in the first place, I was A) pissed off at Marvel, because of the way the business was being run then, and B) interested in the challenge of going over and doing stuff for DC. I think a lot of people—as long as they've never worked for a company—sort of wonder, "Well, wouldn't it be interesting to go work on some of their characters?"

And most of us, over the times, have succumbed to that—gone over and tried the other company's stuff. But having gotten away from comics, then, altogether, and having done a lot of different things with my life



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since, it was very refreshing to get back to where so many things were really new to me again.

The negative feelings that I had had from 1976 were gone—the way Marvel ran the business had changed—and I had been enjoying doing *Coyote* for Epic, and ... the word that keeps coming up is refreshing. It was sort of fun to sit down and play in this universe—or these universes,

since I'm doing the DC thing.

AH: Had you kept up with all the characters, all the comics?

ENGLEHART: No. Over the years I had kept up with various things—Frank Miller's *Daredevil*, whatever books that I said, "Well this is real good. Whether I'm doing comics or not, I want to see this stuff!" But I wasn't really staying on top of everything.

When I went back to this business, Marvel, and DC, for that matter, had to buy me some back issues (laughs) so that I could catch up on what happened to a lot of these people. I just sat down and immersed myself in Avengers lore for about a week. I read up on all the stuff that I had missed. That was interesting because when I did all this stuff the first time, I had turned on to Marvel in 1965, and so I only had to buy three years worth of back issues—in 1965—to be up to speed. And I stayed up to speed right up until I became a writer for Marvel in 1971, and then while I was doing them.

I knew everything that had happened. I had been there when most of it happened. To read seven-eight years of Avengers, say, and various Vision/Witch mini-series, and Wonder Man and Tigra appearances and so on and so forth—was a whole universe that I wasn't there for. Yet I had the same responsibility as always to understand it and to make use of it.

That was kind of fun and interesting, you know, to be writing a story, and say, "Well, I think something happened back around issue 212—let's go have a look!" and search through stuff, and build stories on the basis of a universe which was fairly new to me, rather than one that I had grown up with.

AH: How did you feel about the Avengers as a whole after you left the book?

ENGLEHART: Well, every writer has his own approach. I've always felt that even the books that I was most passionately involved with—which includes *The Avengers*, but when I think "passion" I think of *Dr. Strange* and *Batman*—books that I was very sorry to leave—I have always understood that the comics will go out next month whether I'm doing them or not. And I've never begrudged anybody ... another one that comes to mind is *Master of Kung Fu*, which I co-created with Jim Starlin ... and then sat back and watched Doug Moench and various other people do amazingly good stuff with it over the next X number of years. I mean, I never could quite convince myself that if I wasn't doing it, it didn't exist.

AH: How do you feel about the demise of *Coyote*?

ENGLEHART: Well, I'm very upset (laughs) about that. I really like *Coyote*, I like playing in different universes; I like playing in the Marvel Universe, I like playing in the DC Universe ... I also like playing in the universe I see around me, which is the one that I was using in *Coyote*.

I thought the stuff was getting better and better, but I did make several mistakes. It was my first try at packaging a comic, after all. I didn't fill everybody in on everything that I had



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in mind in terms of concepts until issue #9, after we had seen the Venusians. We had artist problems, we had all the rest of that stuff, but it wasn't until issue #10 that I felt I had everything in place. I was able to start using it all without having to introduce and explain it.

And everything after that—the last year—got better and better and better. But sales, although tending upward, never got up far enough to make it worthwhile to continue it. That was personally distressing because I put a lot into *Coyote*. I really thought, as a lot of people who read it said, that it was a candidate for being the best book out there. And yet, we scared so many people off when [Steve] Leialoha bailed out on the book, we were never able to convince people that it was safe to go back in the water, you know, to come back in and trust us.

I also have a commitment from Jim Shooter to do a graphic album. So *Coyote* is not dead forever and ever. But as far as how do I feel about losing the bi-monthly continuity, I certainly feel bad about that. Because I think that's one book that had so much going on in it, no matter how much I cram into one graphic album, it won't be the same as being able to let this character run on every two months and get involved in things like... you know, he ended up

in Russia in the last two issues.

Frankly, I think that since we were never able to get people to fully trust us, and come back, that, in a sense, it is better to let the gus lie low for a while. If people can find that they like what I'm doing on *West Coast Avengers* and *Vision/Witch* and *Silver Surfer* and *Green Lantern*, and whatever else might come along, in a year or so, people might say, "Well, gee—whatever happened to that old series that guv used to do?"

AH: Looking back, do you think you might have handled *Coyote* differently?

ENGLEHART: Well, knowing everything that I know now, certainly there are things that I would have done differently. Most of that is in the personnel department. As far as the book itself, I don't think it got a fair test as far as whether something as large—I'm talking about conceptually—something as large as *Coyote*

... you know, if the first nine issues had come out on a regular basis, and people had been able to just go with it, and go all the way to the end of the nine issue set-up, I think things would have been different.

If we had done all that and the book had still failed, then I would know that that approach is too big and wouldn't work. As it is, I'm without evidence to the contrary. I wouldn't really want to change what

I did because that large a landscape upon which to play is the one that I wanted to get out there to play on.

AH: What's coming up in *Green Lantern*?

ENGLEHART: I had two overriding goals that I felt were necessary for the book. One was: Hal Jordan had been *Green Lantern* from the beginning. He was a good character; he deserved, based on his decision regarding Carol Ferris and the *Green Lantern Corps*, to go through a period of torment over all this. On the other hand, I could never convince myself that Hal Jordan was gone forever.

On the other hand I really felt that to take John Stewart and to just have him stand in for a year get involved in stuff, and then just be shuffled off again, was not an approach that was fair to him. It was odd—you know it wasn't my doing—but it was odd that Denny [O'Neil] was doing his trip along those lines over in *Iron Man* at the same time that it was happening in *Green Lantern*.

I got together with Denny as soon as I took on the book, and said, "Here's everything that I plan to do, so that you don't inadvertently end up doing it," and he was kind enough to tell me the same thing about his book. (Oddly enough, I needed to know it also because I do *Iron Man* in the *West Coast Avengers*.)



ABOVE: WEST COAST AVENGERS marked Englehart's return to The Avengers—sort of. TOP RIGHT: The new GREEN LANTERN CORPS.

So we deliberately went off in different directions. I felt that John Stewart really ought to be treated as if he were Green Lantern. And I wrote him that way. I made him the star of the book. Nevertheless, Hal Jordan was always going to come back.

[Green Lantern editor] Andy Helier and I—and, as a matter of fact, a lot of friends from New York, in this initial period, bounced it back and forth: "What would be the ultimate solution to all of this?" Would one go? Would they alternate? Would they maybe work together?

And finally the answer seemed to be: well, why worry about just two of them? What about Guy Gardner? What about Katma Tui? What about Ch'p and Salakk and Tomar-Re and the rest of the Green Lantern people? The Green Lantern Corps idea—of a group of Lanterns—has always been very popular when done. It had

never been done as a continuing concept, and so that's what we eventually opted for, beginning with #201.

Basically, if the Guardians, who are supposed to be guarding the universe and so forth, screwed up this badly on the Crisis, what does that mean for the future of the universe, and what does that mean for the future of the Guardians? Without giving too much away, I can say that the title definitely changes to *The Green Lantern Corps*, and we will have basically a six-member group of Green Lanterns: John Stewart, Hal Jordan, Katma Tui, Arisa, Ch'p, and Salakk. We're going to restructure the way the Green Lantern Corps operates. Basically, Green Lanterns will now no longer have to maintain one Lantern per sector. They'll be able to gather together any way they feel is useful for helping the universe.

There's a particular emphasis on Earth, which I don't want to explain

at this point, but there's a reason why Earth is a good place to be if you're a Green Lantern. So a number of them decide, either because their sector was trashed during the Crisis, or because they're friends with people who are going to be on Earth or whatever... Earth becomes kind of a focal point for the Green Lantern Corps.

In addition, I would say that both Guy Gardner and Star Sapphire are going to be playing major roles in the upcoming life of Green Lantern. And after that, I don't want it to be space opera. I've had a good time during the Crisis here—a lot of interesting things have happened, mainly to the Green Lantern Corps members, in lots of interesting situations.

But I didn't feel that, say, the year that Hal spent in space flying around with different alien civilizations played to Green Lantern's traditional strength, which is the people that he knows. Again, most of my series tend to run that way, which is probably why I choose them in the first place. The whole relationship, Ferris Aircraft, the background on Earth, are very important to the series—even though Hal Jordan becomes one of six, rather than the lead character.

So I intend for them basically to be on Earth... to keep the connections to the galaxies as they always—you know, the possibility of going out into space or people coming to visit, the same as always. But I intend to have a group of Green Lanterns who operate on Earth and spend a good part of their time battling super-

villains and other menaces which Earth falls prey to. It's a series, more than any of the others that I'm doing—well, as I said before, I don't like for things to plateau out, but Green Lantern has basically been in transition ever since I picked it up.

It's been changing pretty much continuously for a year, and with #200 that all comes to a climax, and after that, we'll just be in a different realm.

AH: So you're writing another team book, then.

ENGLEHART: Yeah. . . in effect.

AH: You seem to have quite a reputation for writing team books.

ENGLEHART: I guess so. I've written most of 'em, now, over time. I never really liked before to write two team books at the same time. But the West Coast Avengers and the Green Lan-

change radically, Keith Pollard, who was already working on the Silver Surfer graphic album Stan Lee is writing, will also be doing this book. I'm real happy with his stuff. I missed most of his work while I was not doing comics, but I've seen some samples from the Silver Surfer graphic album, and they are beautiful. He has kind of a Buscema approach, maybe modified by more of a connection to the new breed of comic book artist.

AH: Did John Buscema actually complete any issues of the series?

ENGLEHART: Yeah. He completed the first issue—it's a double-sized issue—39 pages. Exactly what happens to those pages of artwork is. . . up in the air right now. There's one feeling that that's the first issue and it's done and it ought to go out.

Lee's Coyote. He didn't suffer the scheduling problems that I did, but this was a book that Stan clearly loved and wished nothing but the best for. It was the first double-sized regular series, as far as I can remember.

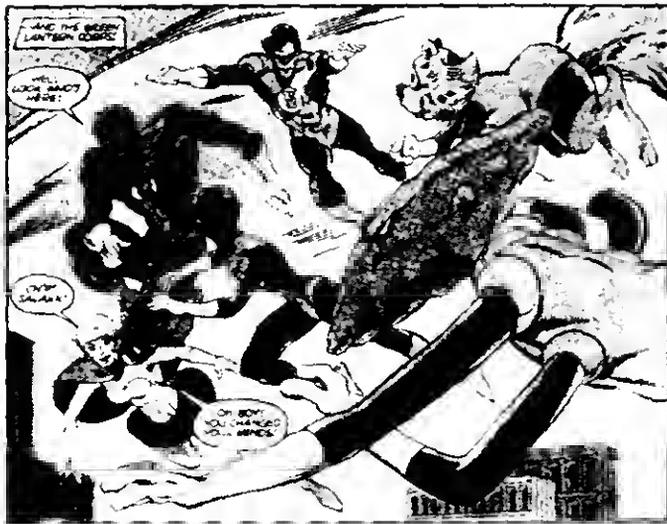
It had a lot going for it, but it somehow sort of stalled out after a while. I think he was running it to—I'm only speculating at this point—but my impression is he was running into sales problems the same way I eventually did on Coyote. He had to kind of abandon what he wanted to do in order to try to hike the sales. In the last issues of the Surfer's old series, as you'll recall, the Surfer sort of fought a hero a month. Well, A) it didn't save the book, and B) it kept Stan from going where he wanted to go with it.

I think that over the years since then, Stan has been able to get to some of those places, but again, not as many as he'd have liked. He's so busy being head of Marvel out in L.A. that the Surfer is one of those projects that he cranks up for every three years. Therefore, the amount of material over the past 20 years has been fairly limited. Also, because Stan has only gotten so far in defining the Surfer, people who have come on to do the Surfer since have—because the Surfer hadn't appeared for some period of time before the (writer) wanted to use him—generally kind of trotted out the same things that were new and exciting back in 1967, to remind the reader who the character was—but they kept being trotted out. The Surfer's head in his hands, his unrequited love for Shalla Bal, and Mephisto come to mind as things which were in every Silver Surfer story ever done.

I thought if I was gonna do this thing, I wasn't gonna do 12 issues of the same old stuff. I decided A) to give the Surfer a purpose in life while stuck on Earth—I'm going to be fairly vague about all this because we're so far away—I don't want to tell everybody what's going on in the book six months before they get to see it. But I decided to give the Surfer something to do while he's on Earth that would keep him from sitting around moaning all the time, and would also have some bearing on his relationship with Shalla Bal.

I also determined to bring the Mephisto—you know, "I will get the Silver Surfer someday" plotline to a head. To get it to the point where, without destroying either of the characters, that I could at least change their relationship.

Thirdly, I saw it as a chance. . . there are a number of very nice ongoing situations in the Marvel outer space milieu—the Skrulls, the Kree, Moondragon, Mantis, people



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tern Corps are so different in the make-up of the people that I don't foresee a problem. And, in fact, Vision/Witch, since Crystal and Quicksilver become sort of semi-regulars, and then you throw in a guest-star, generally, you have almost that many people, even though it's a two-character book.

AH: When will the new Silver Surfer series be out?

ENGLEHART: Well, the answer to that is probably the beginning of the summer. The last I heard was the last week in April, that may shift back to June. [See sidebar, page 48. —ED.]

We had some communication breakdowns within the structure at Marvel. Both John Buscema and I were working on it, but somehow, it wasn't meshing, in getting the whole product accomplished. So we backed off, thought it through, and—again, this is something that's in the process of being resolved, even as we speak.

But basically, John Buscema won't be doing the book. Unless things

There's another feeling that one issue by Buscema and another by Keith might not be what we. . . you know, when Marvel offers a limited series, it's generally considered to be by the same people all the way. There is another school of thought that Keith will re-do the first issue and that's the one that we'll put out. But that's not definite at this point.

AH: What can you tell us about the Silver Surfer mini-series?

ENGLEHART: Well, there are two things that I identify with the Surfer that I wanted to deal with. One was his wimpiness. I thought that there had been far too much of the guy sitting around with his head in his hands, moaning about his fate. That works for a while, but not 20 years.

The other was his romance with Shalla Bal. The Surfer, to my mind, made this incredible splash when he appeared as the herald of Galactus back about 1965. He got his own series in 1967, made an incredible splash, and—I've thought recently that the Surfer might have been Stan

who have celestial connotations of one sort or another, who haven't had a chance to... they come in and are the subject of a three or four episode thing in the *Avengers* or the *FF* or something, and then they go off and wait for the next time they're called.

I thought it would be fun to put all these people together. So, in the course of the series—and I don't mean one a month—I'm going to try and create a fairly elaborate canvas that won't take nine months to explain.

AH: *Why did you return to full-time comic-writing?*

ENGLEHART: Well, after I wrote my novel, I got hired on—I was called in to work at Atari, whose headquarters in Silicon Valley are not very far from where I live. I was doing game design for them, and I was very interested in that situation. I was unskilled in computers, and I went from novice to full-fledged team-member at the Atari game-design group over the course of a year.

I was and am fascinated by what computers can do. I think that home video games did exactly what they were destined to do—they peaked and then they died off. It's a shame that Atari was so badly run that nobody knew what to do next, and they let the company go.

But that was basically it. Those of us in the group called "the Advanced Games Group" were working very hard on a lot of projects that we thought, in their own fashion, were gonna turn the company around. Unfortunately, the company went totally under before—well, we got our first product in the boxes. The first product was boxed, and ready to be shipped, and the company floundered and it never got sent out.

It went out of business in the space of a week. It wasn't as if we didn't know that the company had problems, but the fact that the place was gonna close down was all accomplished in the space of a week. And I just looked around and I said, "what the hell else am I gonna do at this point?"

As it happened, in one of those coincidences that seem to be a part of my life, I was a guest up at the Chicago comics convention the weekend in the middle of the week that followed... I mean, between the time that the word came down that it looked like things were so bad that we were all laid off, a weekend fell in between those two points, and I happened to be in Chicago at a comic convention.

I walked up to Jim Shooter and Dick Giordano and said, "Hi! Anything I can do for you?" (laughs) And they said "yes," and therefore, I came back.

AH: *Have you ever thought about writing another novel?*

ENGLEHART UPDATE: Moving on to Batman and Daredevil

By David Smay

Will you be working on Batman?

They've made me an offer, they've made Marshall [Rogers] an offer and they've made Terry Austin an offer. But it hasn't gotten to the point where the negotiations are finalized. They're interested in us and we're interested in them. But it hasn't gotten beyond that stage yet.

Does DC have any doubts about Marshall Roger's ability to keep up with a monthly schedule. Is that a problem as far as you know?

Not as far as I know. It's not a secret that Marshall is painstaking, and I mean that in the best sense of the word. If he misses deadlines it's because he's trying to make it even better than it already is... I know that Marshall wants to do this job, wants to do *The Batman* and says that he won't have a problem. And I think we all believe him.

Do you know if you would be following Frank Miller on Batman?

As far as I know, Miller's going to do *Batman* for a short run, but the deal we've been offered is a new title. It would be a new *Batman* title. One of the existing titles would cease to exist or change or somehow go away so that in the end there would still



be two *Batman* titles. But Marshall and I would be starting on something called *Shadow of The Batman* #1. **Are you picking up Daredevil?**

Yes, I am.

Who's going to be the artist on that?

We don't know yet. We've got it down to three people at this point. **Are we talking about established art-**

ists or newcomers?

Both. The feeling is that Miller is a class act and to follow him we've got to have a class product, so we're taking our time. As you know, Frank finished off his run with Mazzuchelli and then he's doing two more issues with Walt Simonson doing the art. **Are you going to be taking Daredevil in the same direction Miller's been pointing him recently?**

It's difficult for me to say... I have not seen the last two stories that Frank is doing and I'm very religious about picking up where people left things. My feeling is... I'm going to be going in somewhat of a different direction. Although, as I say, I would pick it up wherever he left it and take it that way and start edging it off in the direction I want to go. From what



I understand... Matt Murdock/Daredevil stabilizes as a short order cook in Hell's Kitchen. It would be, as Frank has left it... Daredevil simply in Hell's Kitchen, a ten block area. I'm not totally enamored of that concept as something for me to work with. I want to make it clear that I am totally enamored of anything Frank does.

You share with Frank Miller the fact of writing Batman and now Daredevil. What do you see as the essential differences between the characters?

I've given a lot of thought to the Batman and I can say that he is a guy who is driven to become the best superhero that he can become. And I use superhero in its purest sense, not as a guy who leaps around flagpoles but a guy who fights crime in any of its ramifications: as a detective, the athlete, the solver of mysteries, so on and so forth. He's driven toward one particular goal. I don't see him as one-dimensional but I see about one and half dimensions. The other half, the Bruce Wayne part, I tend to take a little more seriously than some people. I believe he can function perfectly well as Bruce Wayne. He just doesn't

choose to do it as much, so he's not as practiced at being Bruce Wayne, playboy-philanthropist, as he is at being the Batman.

Daredevil, on the other hand... does seem to be curing himself of a lot of his personal demons. He was never as one-dimensional or obsessed about anything as Batman is... As Frank said in another interview, [Daredevil's] been cruising for a breakdown for about ten years now. Frank looked at that and said fine, let's break him down. So Frank stabilized him at a fairly low level, ... as a short-order cook in Hell's Kitchen and he's just going to take care of the neighborhood. I've talked to Denny O'Neil about this, I don't see a problem in writing both of them. Because Daredevil, still underneath it all, has a happier outlook on life... Certainly over the long term he's a guy who's never been as cold, or black and white as the Batman... In terms of differentiating them—Daredevil has more range to him. He is blind and yet when he becomes Daredevil his world not only exceeds the world of any normal blind person, it exceeds any of us... he works entirely off the messages of his other senses. He actually has a fairly expanded world. Whereas none of that contraction or expansion has anything to do with the Batman. The Batman is going straight for one goal... all of the time.

How about the Silver Surfer limited series?

The biggest point is that I am actually doing it... What we're talking about now is debuting it for Christmas, which is much further away than I would like it, or intended it. But the rationale is fairly simple. This summer, Marvel has all the

as who's drawing it, Pollard has gotten caught up in drawing *The Eternals* now. Whether his schedule will be able to mesh with the Surfer is unclear. Buscema has said that he might be interested in picking it up again. And... as I mentioned, we've got three guys who we think might well do *Daredevil*. Two of them aren't going to get to do it and... Ralph Macchio, [who] is editing both of these books, and I are thinking that one of them might pick up the Surfer.

Because of the delay of the series until Christmas it will now come out after the Stan Lee/Keith Pollard Graphic Album in which the Surfer gets off the Earth. So my assignment, should I choose to accept it, is no longer to do a 12-part limited series taking place before the Surfer gets off the Earth and before the Graphic Album. It has now become an unlimited series taking place after the Surfer gets off the Earth. So I'm going to take as many of the concepts that I had planned to do in the limited series, reshuffle them and try to get them in the unlimited, after-leaving series. The upshot of that is that the Buscema story already drawn doesn't seem to fit anywhere in Marvel continuity. So my best guess at this point is that it might end up as a two-parter in *Fantasia*... or some sort of showcase kind of presentation.

Are there any other projects you'd like to announce?

I am doing the treatment for the Batman movie. People have been telling me for a long time that they were trying to make a Batman movie based on... the eight issues I did back in '76. I finally got the scripts that have existed until this time and indeed, Silver St. Cloud is the love interest and *Boss Thorne* is one of thugs, which is flattering. But what's even better is... they finally came to me and asked me to do it... To make it work as a movie, you have to cover some of the things that people in Hollywood want to see. It's taking my concept and adding more things on to it... like, they want to see Robin as a 12-year-old boy.

The second thing I'm doing... A partner and I have just completed, what you might call, screenplays for an animated adventure game which will be one of five products that will be available when compact disc video comes out. I did do video games at Atari which is what lead to this. There will be animation; there will be FM/CD quality sound. It's quite complex... It'll be an interactive adventure game. It's going to have animation like "Dragon's Lair" but it will be far more logic oriented/puzzle solving than "Dragon's Lair." It's much more like a traditional adventure like *Zork* only with visuals.

ENGLEHART: Yeah. I've spent this past year doing what I was supposed to do, which was write comic books, and try to make people... pleased to see my work. I intend to continue doing that but now, having gotten all these series off the ground, and having gotten past all the parts where you have to sit around talking and figure out what you're gonna do, and how you're gonna do it, and so on and so forth—now I'm at the point where I'm doing it, I'm looking forward to having a little extra time.

AH: Have you considered a sequel



to (Englehart's first novel) *The Point Man*?

ENGLEHART: No. I don't want to do a sequel to *The Point Man*. I've said everything that I have to say about the



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Annuals in the first half of the summer and all the New Universe stuff in the second half of the summer. DC has got Byrne *Superman*, possibly Englehart and Rogers *Batman*, Perez's *Wonder Woman* and it was a purely commercial decision on Marvel's part that the Surfer would just get swamped... So the idea is to hold it off until Christmas. As far

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nature of magic. I can remember driving to Berkeley in 1974 with Al Weiss, and I said to him, "I've explained the universe twice already in *Dr. Strange*—what am I supposed

to do next?"

I had explained the universe, I had explained the nature of magic in Marvel Comics terms a couple of times, and I really wanted to explain

it in real world terms, and explain it in a manner that you can't do under the Comics Code. So I wrote *The Point Man*, and the reaction was good. A lot of people had said, "what about a sequel?" But my feelings on that are that if I did another Max August book, it would be kind of the adventures of an itinerant magician, which is a novelization of the Dr. Strange concept.

Not to knock the Dr. Strange concept, but I don't have any profound magic truth I haven't already expounded upon, and I don't really want to write an adventure strip about a guy who's just a magician. So despite suggestions from a number of people, including my publisher, that I turn it into a series, I really don't think that's the right thing to do. I like *The Point Man* standing on its own. So the [future novels] that I'm gonna do would be different.

AH: Are there any comic book characters that you'd like to write that you haven't yet written?

ENGLEHART: Ummm... that's a tough one, 'cause I've written most of them. A character I've always had a great fondness for is the Sub-Mariner. But he's not really available right now, and I don't have the time to take him on right now. I can't think of anybody right off the bat who I've always wanted to write and never had a chance to.

AH: Have you thought of going back to such books as *Batman* or *Captain America*?

ENGLEHART: I've thought about it. Anything's possible. My feelings when I came back to comics is that I didn't want to do anybody I had already done. Having had that idea, and then taking on Hawkeye and Iron Man and the Vision and the Witch, obviously I didn't quite live up to that, although *West Coast Avengers* and the *Vision/Witch* mini-series are... different in approach than the way I've used them before. So I'm not adverse to doing people that I've already done, if I feel that I can do something new.

AH: One final question—living out on the *West Coast* as you do, I'm curious as to whether you've ever thought about following in the footsteps of some of your fellow comic book writers and writing a movie screenplay.

ENGLEHART: Yes, but I never wanted to get into the Hollywood game. Comics, oddly enough, probably allow the most personal expression on a regular basis of any writing field, and novels allow even more expression, but on a less regular basis. But movies allow very little expression, by and large, and I can't see myself standing around explaining why the story you saw on screen with my name on it was not the story I wrote.



COMICS IN REVIEW

HORN OF PLENTY

UNICORN ISLE #1
written by LEE MARRS
drawn by NICHOLAS KOENIG
inked by ROMEO TANGHAL
edited by RICHARD PINI and JOELLYN
DORKYN
Warp Graphics
\$1.50

On an elsewhen, elsewhere island, the inhabitants prepare for their festival of the summer solstice. It is a time for games, feasting, romance. A time when the master seer will receive a prophetic message from the sacred unicorns the islanders worship.

On the day before the festival, Nils and Nola, twin siblings, are playing in the forbidden sacred groves. Suddenly, a magnificent ebony unicorn confronts them. Communicating telepathically with Nils, the unicorn gives the boy a cryptic warning of danger, then flies away in the company of a second, snow-white unicorn.

Nils and his sister say nothing of their encounter when they return to their parents' home, and turn their thoughts the next day to other matters. As the festival opens, the two sacred unicorns fly over the gathered assemblage. When Nils calls out the name of one of the mythical creatures, he is overheard by a masked man—who is obviously up to no good.

The first manifestation of that comes when an attempt is made on Nils' life. The second, more ominous one comes later, when Nola discovers that the warriors who have been set to guard the slumber of the sacred unicorns have all been slain and the unicorns taken away. Nola is relieved to find that her older brother Truk is not among the casualties, having switched duty with another warrior.

Nola tells Truk of her discovery and he in turn alerts the militia. Rushing to the nearby beach, they find a band of strangers leading the unicorns onto a ship. A fierce battle ensues,

but the islanders are unable to prevent the ship from setting sail.

There is a closer, personal tragedy left in the wake of the theft as well. Nils' and Nola's mother was slain in the battle. Their father then turns on his three children, blaming them for the death of his wife and declaring that he never wants to see any of them again.

And onboard the fast-departing ship, the masked man savors his victory.

Comic book agent Mike Friedrich, who represents the creative team behind this book, opines that "Unicorn Isle is hot." Actually, I would say it was warm. It is certainly not bad, and exhibits a good deal of promise, but it has its share of problems as well.

The concept itself is ideally suited to both Warp Graphics and the current marketplace. It is sure to attract the attention of both the loyal followers of *Elquest* and the many young



COMICS IN REVIEW

people (especially girls, it seems) who have fallen in love with unicorns in art and literature. If it does indeed prove attractive to a female audience, that alone would be sufficient to warrant my full support.

It is obvious that scripter (and layout artist) Lee Marrs has spent a great deal of time developing the manners, customs and speech patterns of the island dwellers, to the point where she is able to write for and about them as easily as though the setting had been Hometown, USA. She has done her homework too well, in fact, which leads to stretches of dialogue that make perfect sense to her and the islanders, but which we newcomers have some difficulty in grasping completely. Doubtless time and familiarity will solve this problem on our part. In the main, she presents a fairly well crafted story.

The same can be said for the art, which is not outstanding but eminently serviceable. It does lack the fine line detail evident in Nicholas Koenig's earlier work, *Merlin Realm*. This may be due in part to the fact that he is here working from someone else's layouts, but I suspect the main answer lies with the inking of Romeo Tanghal, who tends to have a heavy, solid style. Koenig would be better served by an inker with a lighter touch.

There are problems with both script and art, however, sometimes overlapping each other. Marrs's choice of panel layouts is occasionally disruptive and confusing (as in the glow-lance competition scene). Likewise, her pacing and dialogue are sometimes erratic and overly vague.

In combination, the art and script left me uncertain as to whether or not the villains made off with both of the unicorns. The white one is shown coming out of its trance long enough to communicate with the seer, and the drawing makes it look like the creature is possibly rearing up and tossing one of the villains overboard. Yet it and its ebony companion are never shown again. On the final page, a woman who accompanies the master villain claims to

have placed the "remaining" unicorn into deep meditation, then sighs "Ah, only the *one* sacred..." This makes it sound as if the white unicorn has escaped, but it's just not clear.

I also have some problems with the portrayal of the children's father. At first, I thought we were going to be treated to a refreshing and welcome bit of role reversal here, since it was his wife who was the warrior. With her death and his subsequent outburst, however, he seemed to fall into the role of the stereotypical comic book single father. (Nor do I think his wife's death alone was responsible for his actions. He was portrayed as being rather surly early on.)

I've bemoaned this aspect of comics before—the one that seems to say that if a man loses his wife he automatically becomes an unfit parent. If there are ever any understanding fathers in comics, they are either in the company of an equally or more understanding wife—or they're dead, in the convenient manner by which so many comic heroes are orphans. I'm ready for a change of pace—like seeing a few single mothers, which would be much more reflective of the real world.

In balance, *Unicorn Isle* probably has more positive aspects in its favor than negative ones that detract from it. It has the makings of a nice fantasy adventure story; one whose success will probably hinge on how well the characters Nils and Nola are developed in the coming months.

Fans of *Elfquest*, and of fantasy in general, will probably want to at least sample this fare.

DRIVE-IN DRIVEL

B-MOVIE PRESENTS #1
written and illustrated by VARIOUS
B-Movie Comics
\$1.70

You go in expecting the bizarre when you find a comic whose sources of

inspiration are memories of old movie serials and a letter from the late Buster Crabbe. This is also the first comic I have ever encountered in which the creators wish to give "special thanks to God for our given abilities..."

Considering the level of those abilities—at least as displayed here—it's a wonder the gentlemen aren't atheists.

I knew I was in trouble from the start, when I came to the line in the opening editorial which declared that "we be presenting stories in an anthology format." I'm afraid "we" be needing to go back to grammar school.

The lead feature in this new title be "Captain Daring of the Interplanetary Police Force"—written and drawn by Ken Holewczynski. While "cruising the universe on routine patrol," the intrepid Capt. Daring receives an urgent message from Earth. The evil Emperor Shadhar of Venus has developed a particle ray that can block out the rays of the sun—thus plunging the temperature and threatening the life of any planet at which it is directed. As you might guess, Shadhar's first target is Earth.

Capt. Daring and his crewmen, Dan and Jock, are immediately dispatched to Venus, with the promise of reinforcements on the way. The three Earthmen easily enter the Venusian city and the tower where sits the particle ray cannon. Inside, however, they encounter a hostile welcoming committee.

All seems lost, until the reinforcements arrive. Daring breaks free and succeeds in destroying the deadly cannon. Earth is saved.

Mr. Holewczynski states his intent in producing the Captain Daring strip quite clearly. He still carries very strong affectionate memories of the old B-movie serials by emulating their style in comic form.

Nostalgia is a wonderful thing—but highly deceptive. How many of us have clung to the illusion that our favorite childhood TV series was outstanding—only to have those memories shattered by seeing them again as adults? So it is with the old



movie serials. They can be fun to watch, of course, but by and large they were awful motion pictures produced on shoe-string budgets, employing second-rate talent.

Holewczynski has done a fine job in imitating the style of both the old movies and, even more so, the early science fiction comic book strips. It looks and reads like a story Ken's parents may have seen in *Planet Comics*.

The problem with this, of course, should be self-evident. If you faithfully reproduce a dreadful story—all you have is a second dreadful story. Thanks to television, our sense of nostalgia can be indulged at little cost. I would much rather look back on the real thing than waste my time on a pale imitation—no matter how lovingly that imitation was done.

The second feature presented here be "The World of X-Ray," by Mark Paniccia. While it apparently took the encouraging words of a letter from Buster Crabbe to get Mark sufficiently motivated to work on this strip, it in no way patterns itself after the old serials. In tone and style, it would be more aptly described as a New Wave underground.

A game can be made of reading this story. You and a friend can compete to see who can find the most mis-spellings. In the first five pages alone, I came across such examples as: "polution," "all to human," "the

prejudice world," "all most there," and "we're getting arrested."

The story is set in the near future; a time when crime has escalated to the point of being well-nigh uncontrollable. To even the odds, the government creates a police force composed of genetically altered officers, known as Alpha Cops. One of them is a fellow called X-Ray, whose eyes can burn like the radiation after which he is named.

X-Ray is currently occupied in tracking down a dealer who has been dispensing an illegal drug, Metracaine. The reason behind his obsession with smashing the drug ring is the fact that his oldest brother was an addict who died of a drug overdose. The trail X-Ray follows leads him to yet another of his brothers—who is both a fellow policeman and the leader of the drug ring. This brother perishes as a result of the drugs in his body interacting with the power he possesses as an Alpha Cop.

And it probably won't surprise you to learn that the story closes with a passage from the Book of Psalms.

"X-Ray," while marginally a more enjoyable story than the deliberately simplistic "Captain Daring," is more poorly written and cursed with artwork straight out of amateur night. The plot and dialogue seem to come from someone who spent too much time with B-comics rather than

B-movies.

B-Movies Presents could have been an excellent idea for a comic, if the creators had chosen to parody the art form rather than slavishly recreating everything bad about it. I recommend you pass this book by.

My hometown has a theatre offering A-movies for less than it cost me to buy this poor exercise in nostalgia.

MENAGE A TROLL

TROLLORDS #1

Written and illustrated by SCOTT BEADERSTADT and PAUL FRICKE
Tru Studios
\$1.50

Once upon a time, a trio of trolls—who bear more than a passing resemblance to the Three Stooges—were asleep in their cave by the Win-nemasakee River. Then the flood came—and they died.

Sort of.

In a dimensional netherworld, Jerry, Larry and Moe—er, Harry—find themselves faced by the skeletal being which is the embodiment of death. When Mr. Bones checks his records, however, to determine where the trolls are to be sent, he doesn't find their names on the rolls.

An effective sequence from TROLLORDS.



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I THINK
I'LL MAKE A
DIFFERENCE
TODAY!



While Death checks with his boss for a ruling on this unique happenstance, the three trolls sneak away.

Passing through an unmarked door, they find themselves falling through darkness. Instants later, they find themselves back in their own home, seemingly alive and well. Having apparently cheated death, the trolls set out to clean their house—both literally and figuratively.

Meanwhile, on the bridge spanning their river, a young woman named Kelly Ann Nugrowski contemplates her life—and finds it wanting. Taking what figures to be her final breath, Kelly Ann steps from the bridge, giving herself up to the cold embrace of the waters below.

Life, though, is not so easily surrendered, and Kelly Ann decides she is not yet ready to face the big sleep. Kicking out frantically, she rises to the surface of the river, only to find herself too exhausted to reach shore. She passes out, and thus does not feel the trollish hands that latch onto her limp body and drag her safely ashore.

In the nearby woods, another trio cavorts. These three are drunken hunters, who seek to prove their manhood by shooting harmless signs and an equally harmless lawn. If the men remember the three screaming trolls who drive them away, they will doubtless dismiss the sight as nothing more than an alcohol-induced delirium.

Reflecting on these respective acts of mercy, the three trolls come to appreciate the worth of their existence. Unfortunately, Mr. Death returns at that moment, determined that their newfound sense of self-esteem will be... short-lived.

Trollords is one of the reasons why I seek out new titles on the shelves of my local comic shops; why I encourage fledgling publishers to send me samples of their work. I am always hopeful that I will find that rare gem in an ever-expanding rough, that hint of future promise, that creator who is genuinely attempting to do more than emulate Marvel.

This first issue was good. Not marvelous, colossal or stupendous—but good, which is an excellent starting point. There is undeniably an element of the fantastic here, what with little green trolls and an angry “god” much in evidence. But at heart this is a small story, not in terms of focus but of scope. It homes in on real people, like Kelly Ann and the drunken hunters. People whose life or death will not shake the universe, who indeed will make barely a ripple in the fabric of existence. But important nonetheless, because they are alive and live in all its myriad forms is a thing of wonder.

This is probably the direction all alternative comics should take. Most likely they will never be able to surpass the cosmic immensity offered in such abundance by mainstream comics. And even if they could, what would it signify? I frankly care little if we see another world, another galaxy, another universe, completely destroyed.

I do care about what will become of Kelly Ann Nugrowski now.

In fact, I would much rather have been witness to her personal drama without benefit of the three slapstick trolls. In analyzing the fact that I was not totally satisfied with the book, I think therein lies the reason. I could have done without the elements of fantasy.

This is not a fatal flaw, of course, and can be side-stepped. Steve Gerber was able to do this with great effect in *Man-Thing* several years past; using the swamp monster as nothing more than the catalyst to spark stories of genuine human interest. If the creators of *Trollords*, Scott Beaderstadt and Paul Fricke, can achieve the same end, they could have a certified winner on their hands.

If I was once again pleasantly surprised to see such a competently written story from a small publisher, I was no less impressed with the visual strength displayed here. As with the script, the art is actually diminished somewhat by the need to portray the cartoonish trolls. In presenting real people, however, the graphics sparkle. In both its attractiveness and its sense of layout, the art approaches the level achieved by many mainstream comics. The two-page sequence in which Kelly Ann decides to hold onto her life was especially effective.

Trollords #1 proves to be a very enjoyable read, a book that leaves a lingering warmth. As I have said before, I strongly recommend that all of you pick up at least one book each month that you have never tried before—something that is an alternative to mutants and super-teams. *Trollords* could be such a book. You won't always like the new books you sample—you may never like them—but at the very least you will have broadened your horizons ever so slightly.

And at the most you just may discover a book that will come to hold a special place in your heart.

MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR

THE REALM #1

Written by STU KERR
 plotted by RALPH GRIFFITH
 illustrated by TIM MILLER and GUY DAVIS
 inked by TOM DZON
 Arrow Comics
 \$1.50

Alex Stonewell, a young college student, inherits a small sum of money and a lakeside cabin following the death of his uncle. One stipulation of the will is that Alex must spend the money on a trip to the cabin. The youth complies with this not-unreasonable request, inviting his three closest friends to accompany him.

Coming along on the journey are Marge, Alex's brainy girlfriend, Dom, the stereotypical jock, and Dom's girlfriend Sandi, an equally stereotypical rich girl.

In the woods surrounding the cabin, Dom stumbles upon a "treasure chest." When the four friends attempt to open it, however, they are engulfed by a numbing explosion of light. They awaken to find they have been transported to another world, a world of swords and sorcery, of slavery and death at the hands of ogres.

The small band of Earthers is attacked by armored horsemen, who carry Marge and Sandi off to the slave market. Alex and Dom then make the acquaintance of their first friend in this new world—an elfin beauty named Silvertawn. Her skills as an archer help the two men ward off an attack by man-eating ogres.

During the course of that battle, it becomes evident that both of the Earther men have been changed by their mystical journey. Dom now displays almost super-human strength, while Alex is able to project bolts of mystical energy.

They will doubtless need these newfound powers, for at the slave market Sandi has just been purchased by the malevolent Lord Darkoth. Her fate looks grim indeed.

Like *Trollods*, *The Realm* proved to be a much better book than I had anticipated. It treads no new ground, being solidly planted in the many time-honored traditions of fantasy adventure, but it covers that well-traveled ground with competent strides.

Unlike so many origin issues coming from small publishers, this one even takes the time to establish the lead characters, to give them some sense of personality and motivation, before launching into the grand adventure. Granted, it is done in a rather clumsy, soap opera-ish fashion, but still the effort is made, and appreciated.

The story apparently grew out of the creators' interest in role-playing



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games, and as such will probably appeal to other aficionados of that pastime. This background seems to have served them well, by teaching them the necessary skills in creating an interesting cast of characters and giving them a well-developed world in which to romp.

And, despite the stereotypes, there are indications that these particular characters will grow more interesting as the series progresses. As is often the case in fantasy fiction, the female characters seem to offer the most promise, especially the exotic Silvertawn.

The art, while a bit rough around the edges, gave strong support to the story. Ironically, it was a mere two weeks ago in this column that, in the course of reviewing Reggie Byers's *Shuriken*, I commented that I hoped to have more opportunities to sample the Japanese-styled art without the necessity of wading through giant robots to get it. (To be sure, my local comic shop carries many such non-robotic books but since I don't count the ability to read Japanese among my talents, they are somewhat inaccessible to me.)

That's why I was delighted to find that, upon opening this book, it was immediately plain that penciller Guy Davis is one of the growing number of young artists influenced by the Japanese. His images are simple yet fluid, and perfectly suited to this tale.

To again make comparisons with *Trollods*, *The Realm* is not outstanding, but it is a good example of a mid-level book that has every bit as much to offer as many of the titles currently being produced by the mainstream publishers. It is gratifying to see so many promising writers and artists beginning to pop up in small, independently produced comics.

It is a positive development which you and I should try to encourage. Pass up a couple of marginal mainstream titles this week—a *Captain America* or a *Blue Devil*—and instead invest in an alternative publication. You'll always be able to go back and pick up your old standbys at cover price or below.

But if we don't support the (deserving) small publications today they may not be around for us to savor tomorrow.

HERO SANDWICH

3-D HEROES #1

Written by CLIFF MacGILLIVRAY
 illustrated by STEVE HUSTON
 Blackthorne Publishing
 \$2.25

In the past few months, I've hurled my share of brickbats at Blackthorne Publishing—deservedly so, in my opinion. Obviously I have not been alone in my low opinion of many of their offerings. One retailer contended to me that he has begun to routinely skip over the section of his order form devoted to Blackthorne's titles.

But now, I am honestly happy to say, Steve Schanes and crew, have released a book that is good enough to warrant at least modest praise: *3-D Heroes* #1.

This issue spotlights three stories of heroic fantasy, each of them written and illustrated by the team of Cliff MacGillivray and Steve Huston. They range in quality from fair to good.

The first story is entitled "Rescue." In it a roving mercenary named Roland has journeyed to the castle of the sorcerer Axada—wherein, it is said, would be found a captive princess and a fortune in treasure that provides his greatest incentive. By his side rides young Duncan, his put-upon servant.

Roland fights his way past serpents and giants (with no small help from Duncan) and succeeds in killing the sorcerer. He ignores the princess he has rescued until, unable to locate the treasure vault, he savagely turns on her.

Duncan steps in to protect the woman, when a commanding voice calls a halt to the conflict. It belongs to a raven-haired beauty who turns out to be the real Axada. All else had

COMICS IN REVIEW

been merely an illusion designed to test the mettle of the two men.

Having done so, the sorceress takes Duncan to be her husband offering him a life that is both rich and full. Roland too has his wish fulfilled, in a manner of speaking. He does indeed sire many children but he does so as the pig into which he has been transformed.

As can be seen from the above synopsis, MacGillivray's stories take their form from the standard sword-and-sorcery, but for their substance he has gone back to ancient fairytales. He is more indebted to Homer, Aesop, and the Brothers Grimm than he is to Robert E. Howard.

"Rescue" is the most satisfying of the tales presented here, but the second offering, "Deathblow," is also reasonably enjoyable. A warrior named McKenna fights desperately to defend his king and queen when they are attacked by barbarians on their wedding day. Through his efforts, the royal couple is able to escape, but McKenna pays the ultimate price—falling before the barbarian swarm.

In a slight twist, we turn to the final page and discover that this had actually been a science fiction story of sorts. What McKenna had experienced had been nothing more than a mechanically-induced dream—though its fatal climax had been all too real. In his future world, this heroic dream death was the official method of execution.

As with the first story, this one merely presents a variation on a well-known theme, somewhat less effectively, but with sufficient skill to forend any great disappointment.

The final story, "A Perfect Match," is the weakest of the lot. Once again we have a lovely princess held captive in the castle of an evil sorcerer, her father, the king, offers her hand to any man who can safely rescue her. A traveling illusionist named Axis succeeds in freeing both her and a benevolent magician named Pandor.

The story doesn't have a fairytale happy ending, however. The rescued princess prefers to marry Daktar, the handsome captain of the palace guard. Therefore, Axis must settle for a small bag of gold, an invitation to leave the country, and the chance to become Pandor's apprentice. The story seems to expire rather than conclude, but then it could have been handled even worse—by tacking on one of those gory "surprise" endings so prevalent in short stories of this nature.

As you can see, the tales presented here are nothing spectacular, though I would say they are slightly better than average. When it comes to the

art, however, I don't hesitate to proclaim it an unqualified success.

Steve Huston possesses a graphic style ideally suited for the genre of heroic fantasy (or science fiction for that matter). It would not be totally out of line to favorably compare his work to that of John Bolton, who is currently producing some of the finest art in the field. It leagues above what you'll find in a typical Conan story, with a richness and depth of texture all too rare in the comics medium. If Mr. Huston doesn't have a highly successful career in comics ahead of him, I'll be astounded.

As always, the incomparable Ray Zone has done an excellent job of producing first-rate 3-D effects. Such is the strength of Steve Huston's illustrations, though, that they could well have stood on their own—and should have, if it would have resulted in any sort of meaningful price difference.

3-D Heroes is easily the best book to come from Blackthorne recently (though the "Little Nemo" reprint will surely give it a run for its money). Fans of the current 3-D fad will probably grab at anything using that effect, but this particular book will be of equal interest to those looking for sword-and-sorcery with a slightly different twist—and to all fans who appreciate outstanding artwork.

PETERED GUNN

LLOYD LLEWELLYN #1
written and illustrated by DANIEL CLOWES
edited by GARY GROTH
Fantagraphics Books
\$2.25

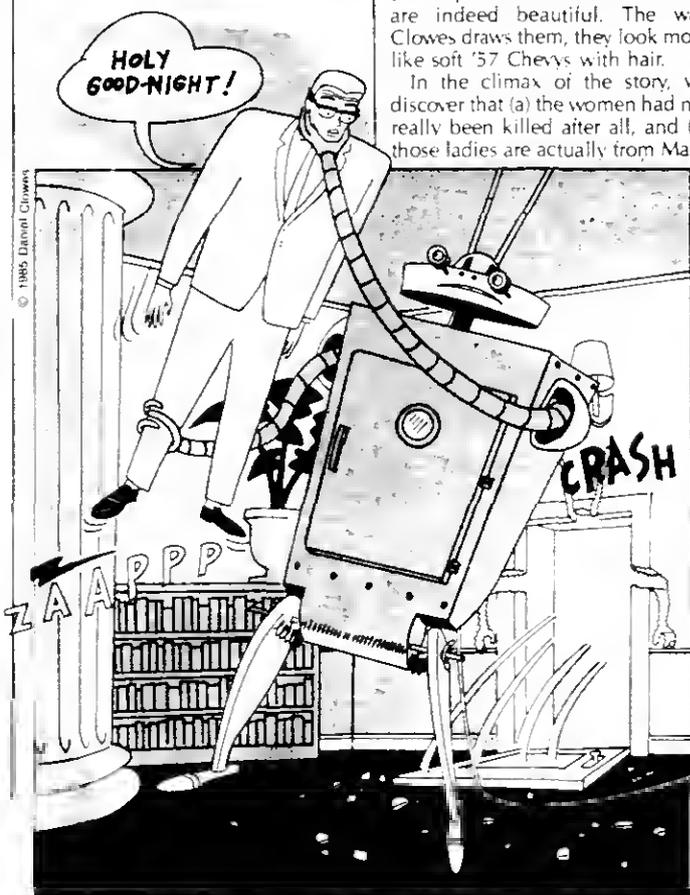
Regular readers will remember that I recently devoted an entire column to the task of ravaging most of the books in the Fantagraphics line. It was a dirty job, but someone had to do it.

Their newest title, *Lloyd Llewellyn*, wasn't available to me at that time, but I feel it deserves a review now, in the interests of fairness—and because I want to see just how long my boss, Gary Groth, will continue to pay me for trashing his literary efforts.

Visually, creator Daniel Clowes appears to have modeled his drawings after some of the more bizarre cartoons produced in the 1950s. As to the inspiration for his stories—that seems to have come from Jack Daniels.

Lloyd Llewellyn is a private eye—I think. He shows no sign of being gainfully employed at any other occupation. In the first of this issue's four stories, a mad monster has been killing beautiful women. I'm taking the script at its word that the women are indeed beautiful. The way Clowes draws them, they look more like soft '57 Chevys with hair.

In the climax of the story, we discover that (a) the women had not really been killed after all, and (b) those ladies are actually from Mars.



You see, all the Martian men are dwarfish little nerds with antennae sticking from the tops of their heads. Faced with such slim pickings, it's no wonder the women skip town and fly to Earth, where—with their formidable figures—they become Jayne Mansfield or Marilyn Monroe.

In other words, the root of the problem is the fact that, you guessed it—Mars Needs Men!

There's no denying that this first story was a laugh an hour. It made moving on to the next tale the greatest pleasure I've had since the last time my wisdom teeth erupted.

Having already proven that the Grade-Z science fiction movies of the '50s could be used as the springboard for an equally horrendous comic book story, Clowes next takes on another hallowed institution—the "Greatest Trucker Songs of All Time" record albums sold during commercial breaks of the Late-Late Show.

Llewellyn is beaten by a gang of hoodlums and dumped in the middle of nowhere. Luckily, he is picked up by a friendly truck driver. In a twist that delivers the biggest surprise since the announcement of Marvel's plans for *Secret Wars II*, we learn that the trucker had actually been dead for four years. That's not so bad—this particular story has been dead for 20 years.

Clowes then treats us to a two-page story in which he demonstrates how well he can use '50s slang. This will come in very handy in case Eisenhower wins the next election.

Of course, no such collection of stories would be complete without a yarn that rips off *The Twilight Zone*. Here we see a cartoonist who is about to lose his job, until the character he draws comes to life and tries to help him by murdering the cartoonist's publisher and his chief competitor.

But—surprise, surprise—the little fellow isn't really a cartoon character at all, but rather an inhabitant of an alien dimension. All the aliens are big fans of the cartoonist's work, and in the end they bring him to live in their world—from which he sends Lloyd Llewellyn a post card.

From other folks who have read this book, I have been hearing such comments as "It's a near miss," and "I wanted to like it." That's understandable. It certainly could have been a good book. The 1950s provide such a rich lode for parody that one needn't even be familiar with the decade to have fun with it.

This first issue is totally devoid of humor, however, looking like the efforts of a death row inmate who was asked to be funny. The leaden, plodding script is so dull that by the time I reached the end of the book

I was actually feeling nostalgic for the real trappings of the '50s.

The art is as uninspired, unattractive and unrelentingly grim as is the script. Looking at graphics reminiscent of those employed in old drive-in movie intermission films was not a pleasurable experience for me, nor one I care to repeat.

The Fantagraphics folks have once again fallen victim to their own dogma, which seems to contend that if something's different, it's got to be good.

If *Lloyd Llewellyn* doesn't show them the errors of their ways nothing will.

CORRECTION

Way back in *AH* #84, in the course of reviewing *Revolver*, I made reference to a strip drawn by Murray Boltinoff. Mr. Boltinoff wrote to tell me that the strip was actually the work of his brother Henry. Believe it or not, I knew that—it was just a classic example of a man's typewriter not working in synch with his brain. My apologies.

OBSERVATION

Editor Laurel Fitch's reply to a fan's letter in the current issue of *Jon Sable* (#37) could be construed to be both condescending and deceptive. The fan had suggested that it would be nice if Mike Grell would ink his artwork; to which Laurel replied: "Mike

Grell does provide us with finished art. Do you see an inking credit?"

Of course we don't—since no one is bothering to ink the art any more. And how "finished" is it? One need only turn to the double-page title spread for that issue. There you see an illustration of an elephant that looks like the work of a 12-year-old. In the background are some black-and-brown smudges that, upon closer examination, are revealed to be literally stick figures of people.

I'm sure there are reasons for Mike's recent difficulties with the book, but the readers are not privy to them. They have every right to voice complaints over the sudden, sharp decline in the book's artistic quality—especially now, since they are being asked to pay 40 per cent more for the title each month.

CONGRATULATIONS

To my heroes at Fantagraphics Books, for insuring that my record remains unblemished. What record is that? Well, you see, every time I present my nominees for the Top Ten comics of the year, at least one of those titles promptly gets cancelled.

This time around, it was *Dalgoda*. Thank goodness it's only a temporary cancellation, as Dal will soon be back in his own four-issue miniseries.

Still, with this kind of track record, perhaps next year my entire Top Ten will be composed of titles I hate. . .

Tomorrow's Hero Today!

ETERNITY
SMITH

by Mallonee and Hoberg

Watch for it this July

from Renegade Press

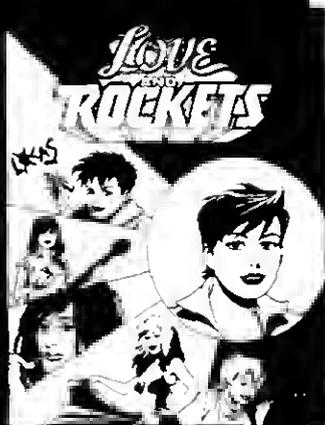
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COMICS MAGAZINES

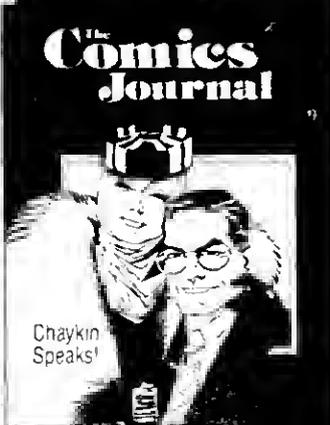


NEAT STUFF: From the demented mind of *Weirdo* editor PETER BAGGE comes this quarterly solo magazine—all-Bagge and all-hilarious strips starring Girly-Girl, Chuckle Boy, Junior, the Bradleys, Stude Kirby, and more! (\$5.50 for three issues)

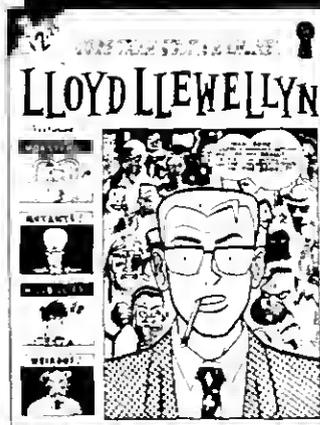


LOVE AND ROCKETS: No doubt: the indispensable comic of the '80s! GILBERT and JAIME HERNANDEZ's bi-monthly title features the continuing series "Locas Tambien," "Mechanics," "Heartbreak Soup," and much more! (\$9.95 for six issues)

ABOUT COMICS



THE COMICS JOURNAL: A hard-hitting magazine of news and opinion, invaluable for anyone who takes comic books and comic strips seriously. One hundred pages of news, reviews, features, and interviews—every month! (\$14.95 for nine issues)



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AMAZING READERS

BOB ROZAKIS
New York, NY

Canary Correction

Enjoyed your Black Canary article in #90, but I found a couple of mistakes in the Checklist. Black Canary's co-starring role in *DC Super-Stars* #10 (*Strange Sports Stories*) is not listed. The story in question was later reprinted in an *SSS* digest as well.

Far more amusing is the fact that you've credited me with writing the *BC* story in *Flash* #92, a pretty neat trick since it was published three years before I was born!

So when's the *Mazing Man* issue?

★ *Oops. How about if we put 'Mazing Man on our Preview Special?*

How about I tell everybody 'Mazing Man is the funniest thing since Kim got his beard caught in the typesetter?' —DS

BILL KROPFHAUSER
Columbus, OH

Son of Canary Correction

Just to prove that none of us are perfect, I've got an addition to my Black Canary index from #90, which I accidentally left out.

Adventure #399 (Nov. 1970)

"Television Told The Tale"

Script: Robert Kanigher

Art: Carmine Infantino/Bernard Sachs

As to the late of the Bizarro World during the Crisis, it's only logical, really: A) The Bizarros do everything opposite to what humans do; B) The humans were trying to save their

world from being destroyed during the Crisis, so 3) The Bizarros were trying to destroy theirs. Simple? Knowing the Bizarros, though, I'm not sure how good a job they did.

JEFF MELTON
Wilmington, NC

Wonderful Wally

I would like to write to you in reference to the article entitled "Wood's War," written by Jeffrey Saltarella [*AH* #87]. It was a nice look at a man whose work spanned over three decades and influenced several artists who have done work since. Wood was a brilliant artist whose unique inking style and excellent story-telling techniques set him apart from others in the field. It is truly a shame that Wertham devastated the career of such a talented artist. Wally Wood was, however, a determined individual who wanted to please comic fans with his enchanting artistry. Because of his determination, we now have such great characters as the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents. Although Wally Wood the man is now lost to us, his beautiful art will entice readers and collectors for decades to come. It is for this reason—in appreciation of his beautiful art—that I would like to ask you to devote an issue to him. He deserves it. Thank you.

★ *Funny you should say that, Jen. Between issues of Amazing Heroes, art director Dale Crain is working hard on assembling a two-volume Focus On: Wally Wood, edited by the omniscient Bob Stewart. I've seen some of the art and photos go-*

ing into the book, and it's going to be astonishing! —DS

GARRY R. JONES
Dover AFB, DE

DC's Untapped Talent

Just thought I'd add a few suggestions and comments of my own. I'd like to see the return of The Top 100. It is the only way I know of, that readers can have an inkling of how comic books are selling. Personally, I'd like to know how *Alpha Flight* is faring now that John Byrne is gone. Is *Alpha Flight* a viable comic book because of the characters or because of the popularity of Byrne? I feel that The Top 100 could be used to gauge the difference, if there is any.

I enjoyed the article on the Atlas titles. *The Destructor* has a lot of untapped potential, the first two issues being the best. No visual changes needed to be made, for the Destructor had more similarities to Daredevil than Spider-Man. Archie Goodwin and Steve Ditko could have done some interesting stuff with that character.

When will the Steve Englehart/John Buscema Silver Surfer be previewed? This is one of the few titles I am actually looking forward to seeing.

Hero histories on *The Forever People*, Jimmy Olsen, and Mr. Miracle would complement The New Gods hero history from awhile back. Also, *The Forever People* and the *Infinity Man* are other characters with unexplored potential. I hope one day Kirby will return to these characters and explain their place in his Fourth World saga.



Although DC has more of the most popular artists and writers working for them, they really don't seem to know how to successfully utilize their talent. People like Gil Kane, Gene Colan, Doug Moench, Jack Kirby, Steve Englehart, and Frank Miller should be given creative freedom tempered with careful editing to give Marvel, a pale imitation of what it used to be, a real run for their money. New characters and concepts or redefining old characters and concepts by the most gifted storytellers should make DC more competitive with Marvel, with an emphasis on new characters and concepts. I'd like to see DC whip the shit out of Marvel, storywise (primarily) and saleswise. If Jim Starlin defects like John Byrne did (Starlin's done a few DC covers lately), Marvel will have to develop another concept-man because they won't have any left. John and Sal Buscema aren't doing anything new, Chris Claremont is only successful with mutants, and all the newer artists have yet to come up with any truly memorable characters.

I think that Jim Shooter is still working for DC the way he's alienated most of the bullpen and destroyed Marvel's credibility with his writing in *The Secret Wars*.

An interview with Paul Neary would be a welcome surprise. Is this the same man who drew "The Exterminator" and "Hunter" series for Warren a few years back? Hero Histories on those Warren characters would be interesting, too.

Galacy and Moench and Englehart and Rogers on *Batman* and *Detective*. Just think about it.

★ I am. I'm thinking about Byrne's *Superman* and *Perez's Wonder Woman* too. Check our *Steve Englehart* interview this issue so you can see what is or isn't happening with *Batman* and *Silver Surfer*. DC does seem to be mounting a serious charge. It will be interesting to see if *Marvel's Mutant Appeal* and its *New Universe* will be enough to stave off those heavy hitters and special projects like *Chavkin's Shadow* and *Miller's Dark Knight*. There are going to be some great comics coming out this year and I don't mind going out on a limb and saying that I think *Alan Moore* and *Dave Gibbons's Watchmen* is going to be the best series of the year. I've seen a xerox of the first issue. Word to the wise. Oh yes, that is the same *Paul Neary* that used to work at *Warren* and I'd like to do a *Warren* retrospective some time this year. If for no other reason, just so I could put *Vampirella* on the cover.

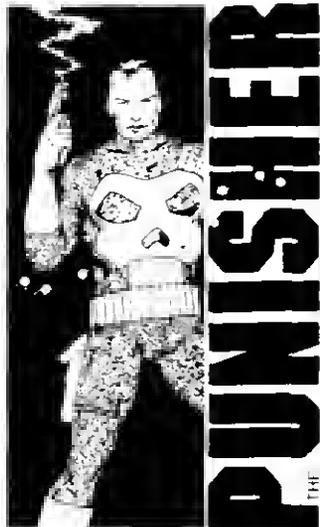
And Jim Starlin has now left Marvel, as I'm sure you've heard.
—DS

WILLIAM RUDD
(No address given)

In Defense of No-Brainers

I've been reading *Amazing Heroes* for about a year now and on the whole have enjoyed it very much. What prompted me to write is your constant harping about how terrible things are at Marvel and how *Secret Wars* is a threat to our way of life. What I want to know is how all these insightful letter writers who can't believe the success of *Secret Wars* were able to judge this series since they all claim they wouldn't have been caught dead buying even a single issue. Well I'm here to say I admit to not only buying *Secret Wars* but enjoying it. Sure it was a no-brainer but so what? I mean this is just a comic book. No one was holding a gun to peoples' heads forcing them to buy it. Sure I like Miller's *Daredevil*, but what's wrong with a little brainless action now and then? Maybe I liked *Secret Wars* because I liked to see Dr. Doom become the most powerful being in the universe (except for Superman?). The main problem the critics seem to have is that they forgot why they started buying comics in the first place. Now don't tell me you bought your first

comic for character development and adult relationships. You bought them to see good guys fight the bad guys. So Shooter put out a series dedicated to this portion of the audience. It didn't interfere with any of the regular lines to any extent, so what's the big deal? *Secret Wars II* was a bit much but if you just read *X-Men* and *Daredevil* did the one issue crossovers hurt that much? *SWII's* biggest problem for me was that it was dull but I never get my expectations up for anything that uses a Roman numeral as part of the title. I did like to see the *Celestials* and *Eternity* and guys like that actually move around. Of course, I would have liked it a lot more if they beat the crap out of the *Beyonder* but, oh well. Anyway, as a result of *Secret Wars* people seem to be taking this as a signal Marvel has hit bottom. Creative collapse? Come on! Hasn't anyone been reading *Squadron Supreme*? Oh yeah, that's a rip-off of the old-old JLA, but a damn creative rip-off. As a matter of fact DC did have an almost identical situation. A parallel world where the JLA had taken control of the world. DC, not on the verge of creative collapse, can't think of anything to do with this so they destroy it in about five panels in *Crisis*. Just who ran out of ideas here? And what about *Thor*? Remember how dull it was before Simonson? And Claremont's still around, isn't he? *X-Factor* could turn into something good and how about Englehart and *The West Coast Avengers*? And Stern and Buscema's work on the *East Coast Avengers*? And didn't I hear that Stan Lee will be doing a new *Silver Surfer* story? Not only that but what about *The Handbook of the Marvel Universe*, *The Marvel Saga* and the *Official Indexes*? These things were talked about for years, but look which company is setting the trends. Still you say aside from all this, this is still the lowest point in Marvel's history. Boy, you guys must have short memories. Just a few years ago *Thor*, *Iron Man*, and *Captain America* were deadly dull, the *X-Men* were off someplace in space called "Sleazeworld" and *The Dazzler* was the rookie of the year. And before that I thought the world would come to an end when both Kirby and Lee left. Remember what happened to *Spider-Man*? Before Lee left, Spidey was fighting drug dealers. Right after Lee left, Spiderman grew four arms and fought a vampire and a dinosaur. Things looked pretty bleak then too. Then came some people like Byrne, Claremont and Miller and things picked up again. Now Byrne and O'Neill are leaving and that hurts but



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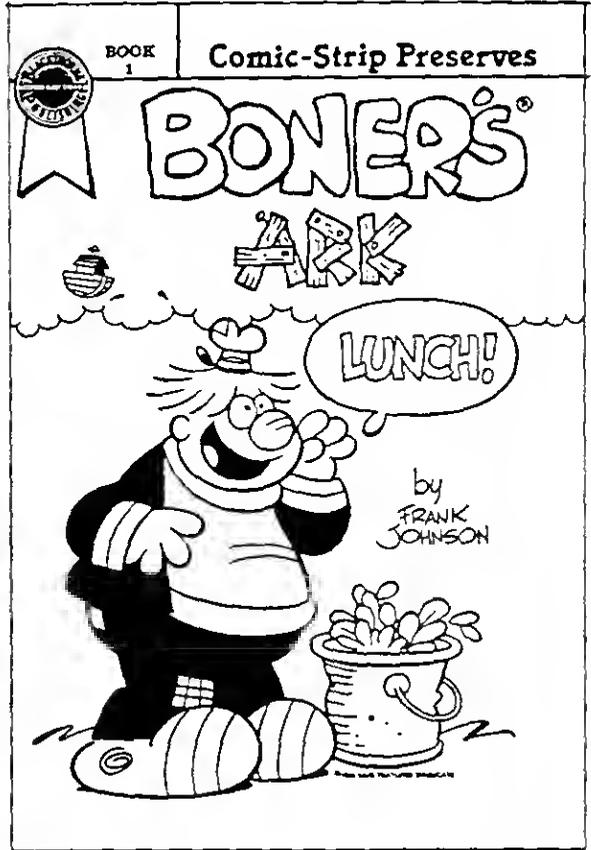


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it's not the end of the world. At least now there are alternatives. I just wish you wouldn't be so one sided about this. Your articles are good but your reviews and letter columns are just so biased it's not even funny any more. At least pretend to be objective. Just because *Marvel Age* has only one point of view doesn't mean you have to.

P.S. And bring back The Top 100.

★ Do you guys realize how much work it requires to put together *The Top 100*? Sheesh. I'll try but I really don't know if it's feasible. I always try to assemble a letters page that is representative of the mail we get. If the correspondence of late seems anti-Marvel it's because most of the mail has leaned that way. But I honestly don't think R.A. has an anti-Marvel bias. As for the rest of your letter, does the phrase "damning with faint praise" mean anything to you?

—DS

BILL MIDDLETON
Clovis, NM

Cool Appraisal of Hot Topics

Reading the latest issue of *Amazing Heroes* is always fun. Your news items, feature articles and letters pages are interesting and informative. However, there are a few hot topics of debate running rampant in fandom lately that I really would like to comment upon.

First, there is the *Secret Wars* controversy. By now, it should be safe to assume that the infamous two series which bore this name have been universally condemned by every intelligent comics reader in the free (and possibly unfree) world. I, personally, strongly support this mandate and thoroughly agree that these stories were possibly the lowest points of an otherwise very promising decade for the comics hobby and industry in general. But Okay! Enough already! Everybody knows what an over-hyped rip-off *Secret Wars* was. But it's too late to do anything about it now, and the sooner this particular topic fades from memory (and print), the sooner we'll all be able to forget about this dismal title.

Then there's the stink about *The Squadron Supreme*. Sometimes I seriously wonder if any of the fans that so loudly proclaim this book is a rip-off of the JLA have even read one issue of this series. If this is true, I would like to state here that they are missing one of the best superhero titles currently being published.

Granted, the Squadron began years ago as a parody of the Silver Age's premier super hero team. But anyone who has been reading the present series knows that writer Mark Gruenwald is not exactly giving us the rehashed adventures of the Justice League. The main theme of this comic was such an obvious idea, that I'm amazed that no one has used it before. Besides the "Utopian Program" plot, Mark has thrown in some nice characterization, a mess of plot twists and turns and a large dose of reality to make the Squadron's fantasy world seem a little closer to our own. This book is an interesting, if not epic, attempt at mixing the true science fiction genre with that of the super hero story. This series has been a lot of fun to read so far and easily one of Marvel's best. But for those who are still complaining about copyright infringement, I must repeat, they should be reading this series. If they had been, they would know that at least one fourth of the Squadron's original membership has been killed off up to this point in the

story. Then they would also know that most of these members have been replaced with totally new characters who are definitely not copies of the old JLA. If the quality of this mag could be sustained in an open ended series, I would be delighted. When Marvel creates their new universe this summer (considering this claim, too, may only be another product of their mighty hype machine) I'm hoping that *The Squadron Supreme* may be a flagship title of this new universe.

A third popular topic of dispute has been about the after effects of *Crisis on Infinite Earths* and the future of Superman under the creative control of John Byrne. I am a long time fan of DC Comics and though I did think some of the changes were a bit extreme, I still find myself standing behind the story and appreciate the fact that DC actually had the guts to make a few permanent changes in their legendary universe. Like many others I hated the fact that Supergirl and the Flash were killed in this series. However,



Illustration by PETER IRG and WILLIE BLYBERG

AMAZING READERS

I also hated how these particular characters were being handled in their own late, solo titles. What had begun as original and interesting concepts in the hey day of the Silver Age, unfortunately deteriorated into boring predictability. Uninspired script, art and sales led to the demise of these heroes as much as anything else.

My other gripe with the Crisis was the destruction of Earth II. I really wish they hadn't done this. Fortunately Golden Age fandom has a good friend in the professional comic business. His name is Roy Thomas and he is one of the few top creators who really gives a damn about what he is doing in comics. If some at DC had had their way, all references to Earth II and most of the Golden Age heroes would have ceased immediately after the *Crisis* series. Thanks to Roy though, fans of the *All-Star Squadron* no longer have to fear for the worst. The title will continue, perhaps in a Baxter paper edition later on, and will not be considered as part of the current DC history, but basically exist in a universe all its own. And isn't that how it should be?

Except for the things I've mentioned above, I am looking very forward to exploring the new DC Universe and reading some of the new comics DC has projected for this year. With so many heroes and villains on one earth, team-up fans should be in pure heaven. Already a nice spin-off from the Crisis has been the introduction of the old Charlton heroes into the mainstream of the DC Universe. I wish people would remember things like this when they rant and rave about all of the bad changes that transpired in Crisis.

As for John Byrne on Superman. I say, go for it John. Over ten years of generic Superman stories is enough. Sure Supes has a long and glorious history and for those who really care about that history it will live on forever in their hearts, minds and back issue collection. But the sooner long time readers face up to the fact that DC Comics has launched an entire new age of comics, the sooner they will be able to enjoy the sweeping changes that have been made. Personally, I think the best is yet to come from this company and if the thought of George Perez doing Wonder Woman, Frank Miller and possibly Marshall Rogers on Batman and John Byrne taking over Superman doesn't excite your little comic collecting heart, nothing will.

T.M. MAPLE
Weston, Ontario

Protest Lodging

A letter of mine, published in #87, noted a news report (not from *Amazing Heroes*, I might say) that DC was planning to restart *Action Comics* at #1 as part of the changeover to the new John Byrne version of Superman. Well, even before my letter saw print, I learned that *Action* would continue its numbering sequence. So, I apologize for any problems that may have been caused by my reaction to that original false report.

However, the information I possess now indicates that as part of the changeover process *Action* will go into suspension for three months. *If this is true* (hey, I'm not taking any chances *this time!*), then I must still lodge at least a minor protest. Unless I'm much mistaken, *Action Comics* has been published each and every month since its first issue—an unbroken publishing record spanning 48 years! (In fact, if I read my history correctly, issue #s 334, 347, 360 and 373 were published in the '60s as "giant" issues in addition to the monthly schedule. Thus, in a way, *Action* has appeared more than monthly. If you work it out, given that #1 was dated June 1938, the June 1986 issue should be #577. Adding those four giants, we get #581 but then, as I recall, DC used to have a cover date two months in advance, so moving to the current three-month lead "cost" an issue, making it #580 in June 1986—as it in fact is! (Clear as mud, right?)

I realize this is a somewhat minor point in the scheme of things, but it is a pretty amazing record and is (I think) unequalled in comicdom. If it happens, I will be sorry to see it. (Besides, it means just that many more months to wait until #1000! And have I got a great suggestion for the anniversary story in *that issue!*)

P.S.: I know *AH* isn't into underground comics but why not a review of Jack Jackson's historical work. After all, his historical material consists of true *Amazing Heroes*. I wish Fantagraphics could have Jackson do a regular historical series like *Journey* except he'd cover different historical people who fascinate him. Perhaps a series of mini-series covering a different person or era that interests him.

★ *I'm genuinely interested in opening up the scope of AH to include an occasional run down of European and Japanese comics. I don't know if a Jackson review is really AH's turf but if I got enough fan interest I would certainly consider it. Amazing Heroes is undergoing a period*

of redefinition. I need to hear from you, the readers to know what you would like to see. Foreign comics? Golden Age stuff? Articles on animation? Let me know. —DS

VIC MORDOH
Ocala, FL

Flags and Shadows

Thanks for the Shadow Preview in your February 1 issue. It's great to see the hard work a comic creator like Howard Chaykin puts in to a comic. Unfortunately to do the work on the *Shadow*; Howard has to give up *American Flagg!*, the most innovative comic book ever. I guess as a comics fan you can't win them all.

★ *Yeah, but you can win enough to keep you going. I miss Howard's work on American Flagg! too. Flagg was never simply a linear story but a dense layering of images that drew you into a completely other environment. It was a bold and successful experiment and without Chaykin's vision to guide it, I think it faltered. His new series, Time² looks promising but I wish all of his protagonists didn't look so damn similar.* —DS

DAVID WALTON
Mountain View, MO

More on European and Japanese Heroes

I just received 88 and 89 and was favorably impressed. Your Small Press column is a gift to those of us looking for alternatives to "Amazing Heroes" and I like R.A. Jones's clear reviews even when they conflict with the hand that feeds him.

May I suggest adding a column for European and Japanese heroes? I note the title of the magazine is *Amazing Heroes* not *Amazing U.S. Heroes*. Possibly the European column could be written by [Kim Thompson], Mr. Raiola, or Rick Marshall while the Japanese hero column could be done by Vernon Grant or Manga Manga author Frederick Schodt. Maybe you should update the European Invasion issue to include Japanese comics.

★ *Another vote for foreign comics. Have you been following the "European Heroes" series in our cousin magazine, NEMO: The Classic Comics Library? The Comics Journal has also featured several major articles on foreign comics, most recently in #105.* —DS

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Letters of comment are welcomed by just about everyone, and if you have comics of your own, trades can often be arranged. You're welcome to send them to me too. I can only review a fraction of what comes out, but I'll definitely read it and try to respond with a postcard at least. You can reach me at P.O. box 698, Tarrytown, NY, 10591-0698. (Comments about this column should be sent to AH as usual.)
—SCOTT McCLOUD

Ray Zone's ZOMOID ILLUSTRATIONS: "The One-Eyed Guy" by Lindsey Loch, "The Videovox" by Ken Tso, "Mojo" by M. Fleener, "Atom Bomb" by Andy Takajian, an untitled strip by Victor Acevedo, "Ghost Sodbuster" by Chuck Morelli, "L.A. Saturday Night" by La Puta, and "A Rock Fable" by Ramona Crimson.

Total for \$5.00 ppd. from Ray Zone, 128 N. New Hampshire, Los Angeles, CA 90004. Mature readers.

(There are many others so be sure to ask for the latest listing.)

I don't care much for the term "newwave." Like the "underground" label, it's bound to become increasingly narrow and repressive as certain art styles get firmly pegged as newwave, creating the inevitable cliques and stylistic "closed shops." Nevertheless, there is a strong New Wave (two words) sensibility in today's graphic artist and some of it was bound to spill over into comics. Those styles of art may not be what Clay Geerdes had in mind when he

coined the term "newwave," deliberately separating it from New Wave music, but it does seem to have affected some of the newest newwave comics around, Ray Zone's *Zomoid Illustrations*.

Zone is probably best known to fans for his 3-D effects on several recent comics. His own publications are by artists who apparently share Zone's interest in the American art-forms which, like 3-D, are usually frowned on by the established Fine Arts community. As Zone put it in a recent interview, "I have aligned myself with the lowbrow and the disreputable because I am a patriot of American arts and will not wait for continental critics to champion the

5 1/2" x 8 1/2" different colored papers. Of the eight listed here, all but one are four-pagers (a single 8 1/2" x 11" sheet folded once). The other is an eight-pager.



© 1986 Andy Takajian



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Four panels from Fleener's striking wordless comic MOJO.

native forms." Apart from this overriding attitude, the artists Zone has printed in *Zomoid Illustrations* are given free rein. The average *Zomoid* is just a single sheet of colored paper, folded once to make four "pages," on which the artist draws whatever strikes him as appropriate to that format. Much of the resultant material is very crude, scatological, or juvenile in nature, but most are, at least, challenging in their use of experimental graphic techniques and new methods of storytelling.

Whatever traps lie in the term, the idea that comics can play a role in the New Wave of graphic art (which does cover much the same territory as *Zomoid*, after all) is a valid one. And when I think of that kind of "newwave" comic, I can think of none more deserving of the label than the *Zomoid* series. Which, of course, is why we call them "avant-garde" instead... Go figure it.

BOYS AND GIRLS GROW UP #5 by various. Edited by Amy Crehore and Tom Campagnoli. \$3.25 postpaid from P.O. Box 5718, Richmond, VA 23220.

Boys and Girls Grow Up is an anthology comic featuring stories by about a dozen artists. The strips are drawn in a bewildering variety of styles and don't have much in common, but the artists themselves do. All of them either live or have lived in Richmond, Virginia. This "regional" theme isn't overplayed in *Boys and Girls*, but it does signal an increasing trend, especially for small press where there are no national centers of production, just several hundred individual artists scattered across the

country. By making this aspect of their contributors' backgrounds a relevant issue, editors Crehore and Campagnoli are helping to re-establish the seldom-discussed link between what an artist draws and what the artist is in "real life." As for the stories themselves, most fall somewhere between talk-art and New Wave styles. A few are incredibly messy and hard to read, but at least worth trying, especially Roger Carrington's wildly demented "Slow-junior." *Boys and Girls* isn't a great technical achievement, but there's plenty of honest and thoughtful work in it.



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